MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

KALHANA

Somnath Dhar



SAHITYA AKADEMI

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First Published 1978
Second Printing 1984

Rs. 4

Published by the Sahitya Akademi and
printed at Roopabh Printers, Vishwas Nagar, Shahdara, Delhi-110032

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Introduction

India's distant past is blurred for lack of precise chronicles. The conception of history in ancient India took the form of chronicles of achievements of the rulers—real or mythological. The *Puranas*, for instance, gave genealogical records and described at length the achievements of kings who ruled India before the advent of the Aryans. But few facts about these rulers are available for attempting a scientific history. In the whole period of Sanskrit literature there is hardly any writer who can be seriously regarded as a critical historian.

It is only after the sixth century of the Christian era that we get chronicles of illustrious rulers in India, such as Bana's *Harshacharita*, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, the *Ain-i-Akbari*, the *Akbarnama*, etc. The facts contained in these books can be verified with reference to a mass of historical material in contemporary works of literature and also to epigraphic and numismatic evidence. Thanks to Kalhana, Kashmir occupies the place of pride in India for having a comprehensive recorded history extending to thousands of years past.

The *Rajatarangini*, or the "River of Kings", by Kalhana Pandita, is the earliest extant history of Kashmir. A unique historical poem, written between 1148 and 1150 A.D., the *Rajatarangini* contains valuable political, social and other information pertaining to Kashmir and the rest of India. In the words of H.G. Rawlinson, it is "Hindu India's almost sole contribution to history." Among the extant works of Sanskrit literature, Kalhana's Chronicle stands out for its comparatively exact

chronology. It has also offered the key to fixing the dates of many Indian scholars who wrote literary and philosophical works. Indeed, the Chronicle has contributed a good deal to the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.

The scanty historical records of the later Sanskrit chronicles are better interpreted, thanks solely to the accurate information of Kalhana's Chronicle. Thus has Kalhana, the great poet-historian, not only saved the history and ancient culture of Kashmir from oblivion, but also helped the student of history to synthesize the disjointed accounts of later chroniclers. And, what is more, the student of the history of Kashmir can intelligently converse with the past in a more satisfactory manner than is possible for a student of any other state of India.

The story and ethos of the *Rajatarangini*, how Kalhana presents an authentic picture of his contemporary social, political life, as well as of the past, were summed up by Jawaharlal Nehru, in the course of his long foreword to R.S. Pandit's translation[1] of the Chronicle. Here is an excerpt:

> It is history and it is a poem, though the two perhaps go ill together and in a translation especially we have to suffer for this combination. For we cannot appreciate the music of the poetry, the charm of Kalhana's noble and melodious language . . . It is a story of medieval times and often enough it is not a pleasant story. There is too much of palace intrigue and murder and treason and civil war and tyranny. It is the story of autocracy and military oligarchy . . . it is the story of the kings and the royal families and the nobility, not of the common folk. And yet Kalhana's book is something far more than a record of kings' doings. It is a rich storehouse of information, political, social and, to some extent, economic. We see the panoply of the middle ages, the feudal knights in glittering armour . . . and intrigues and fighting, and militant and adulterous queens. Women seem to play quite an important part, not only behind the scenes but in the councils and the field as leaders and soldiers. Sometimes we get intimate glimpses of human

1. The Indian Press, Ltd., Allahabad, 1935; reprinted, Sahitya Akademy, 1968 and 1977.

relations and human feelings, of love and hatred, of faith and passion. We read of Suyya's great engineering feats and irrigation works; of Lalitaditya's distant wars of conquest in far countries; of Meghavahana's curious attempt to spread non-violence also by conquest; of the building of temples and monasteries and their destruction by unbelievers and iconoclasts who confiscated the temple treasures. And then there were famines and floods and great fires which decimated the population and reduced the survivors to misery.

It was a time when the old economic system was decaying, the old order was changing in Kashmir as it was in the rest of India. Kashmir had been the meeting ground of the different cultures of Asia, the western Graeco-Roman and Iranian and the eastern Mongolian, but essentially it was a part of India and the inheritor of Indo-Aryan traditions. And as the economic structure collapsed, it shook up the old Indo-Aryan polity and weakened it and made it an easy prey to internal commotion and foreign conquest. Flashes of old Indo-Aryan ideals come out but they are already out of date under the changing conditions. Warlords march up and down and make havoc of the people. Popular risings take place—Kalhana describes Kashmir as "a country which delighted in insurrection!" and they are exploited by the military leaders and adventurers to their own advantage. . .

The content of *Rajatarangini*, until it reached the shape and form that Ranjit Sitaram Pandit gave it in his translation, made quite a trip through the manuscript tradition that it travelled, which is worth recalling. Thanks to Kalhana giving exact dates at the beginning and conclusion of the Chronicle, the body of the manuscript could not have been tampered with after his completion of the work. It has, however, been seen from the extual corruptions and some metrical faults, particularly, in the concluding portion, that he did not revise the whole of the work. The last 600 verses containing a few almost meaningless passages and some lacunae reveal this defective feature the most.

Whatever the drawbacks, the oldest and completest record of Kashmir history was bound to excite the interest of the ater

historians. The first translation of a portion of the *Rajatarangini* was done in Persian, at the behest of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1421-1472 A.D.) of Kashmir. The version was entitled *Bahr-ul-Asmar* (or, the Sea of Tales). When Emperor Akbar annexed Kashmir, he ordered Abdul Kadir Al-Badaoni, in 1594 A.D., to complete the translation. Abul Fazal included a summary of the ancient history of Kashmir in his *Ain-i-Akbari* and mentioned Kalhana as the source. In Emperor Jahangir's reign, Malik Haider brought out an abridged edition of the *Rajatarangini* in Persian in 1617 A.D. Dr. Francis Bernier (1665 A.D.) referred to Haider Malik's translation of the *Rajatarangini* in his *Paradise of the Indies*. Likewise, Father Tiefenthaler drew on his abridged summary a century later.

Sir William Jones, the pioneer of European Sanskrit studies, had announced in the *Asiatic Researches* at the beginning of the 19th century that he was contemplating "the history of India from the Sanskrit Cashmir authorities" but he did not live long enough to secure the materials. An incomplete copy of the *Rajatarangini* was secured by Colebrooke in 1805 A.D. but his account of the manuscript saw the light of the day only in 1825 A.D.

Better textual material was obtained by Moorecroft, who arrived in 1823 A.D. in Srinagar with the permission of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and had a Devanagari script prepared from an old Sharda manuscript. This became the basis of an edition of the *Rajatarangini* which was published in Calcutta under the auspices of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1835 A.D. The manuscript was characterised by Stein as "the codex archetypus of all Kashmirian manuscripts" but it suffered from faults of transcription. Unacquainted with the traditions and topography of Kashmir, the Calcutta scholars had taken undue liberties with the text.

In the meantime, Dr. Horace Hayman Wilson, had blazed a trail, nearly ten years earlier, with the publication of "Essay on the Hindu History of Cashmir,"[1] which, containing a critical abstract of the first six cantos of the *Rajatarangini*, familiarised European historians for the first time with the important work. The Sanskrit scholar, avoiding close translation, adroitly drew

1. *Asiatic Researches*, Calcutta, 1825, Vol. XV.

on three incomplete Devanagari manuscripts.

The original Sanskrit text was drawn for the first complete translation of the *Rajatarangini*, and it was published in French in 1852 A.D., under the prestigious banner of the Societe Asiatique at Paris. The translator, A. Troyer, a Frenchman, then Principal of Calcutta Sanskrit College, had, however, drawn on the same materials as those used at Calcutta in 1835 A.D.

The Calcutta edition of 1835 was also used by Jogesh Chunder Dutt for this translation of the Chronicle into English entitled "*Kings of Kashmira :* being a translation of the Sanskrit work *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana Pandita," which appeared in Calcutta, during the period 1879-1887 A.D. In some ways scoring over the Troyer edition, the Dutt translation was, however, tainted by the faults of the Calcutta edition, plus the translator's inability to tackle the references to the topography, traditions and institutions of ancient Kashmir.

The interest of scholars in the *Rajatarangini* continued unabated. A. Cunningham, visiting Kashmir after the advent of the Dogra rule, clarified a number of points bearing on the system of chronology of the *Rajatarangini* as well as the numismatic evidence involved. Throwing light on the era used in Kalhana's chronological accounts, he fixed the dates for almost all kings of the *Rajatarangini*, to a fair point of accuracy. At the same time, General (then Captain) Cunningham cited the numismatic evidence[1] for a critical assessment of important events recorded by Kalhana. A study of the existing architectural monuments of the Hindu period also enabled the scholar-soldier to pinpoint a number of places which were important in determining the ancient topography of Kashmir.

Kalhana's Chronicle again elicited western attention, this time in Professor Lassen's well-known encyclopaedia in German, *Indische Alterhtumskunde*, presenting an exhaustive analysis of the historical contents of the work. Despite the professor's learning, the encyclopaedic review did not add to the historical data already collected by Dr. Wilson and General Cunningham.

1. This evidence, with later finds, has continued to enlighten the labours of translators and historians, in the present century.

It was left to Professor G. Buhler (then of the Bombay Education Department) to show, as a result of his visit to Kashmir in 1875 A.D., the right methods for reconstructing the ancient geography of Kashmir, which, he rightly stressed in his celebrated *Report*, was indispensable for the full comprehension of Kalhana's Chronicle. The Kashmir tour of the learned antiquarian became a memorable event for Sanskrit philology as a whole. As for the *Rajatarangini*, Professor Bühler indicated the materials that were at hand—like the *Nilamatapurana*, the later Sanskrit chronicles, and other Kashmir texts—for its elucidation. He also established the absolute superiority of the Kashmir manuscripts over the Devanagari manuscripts and thus led the way for the critical reconstruction of the genuine text of the *Rajatarangini*. His famous *Report* l aid down the critical principles for the future historians as to how to use Kalhana's Chronicle for the history of Kashmir and the rest of India. Inspired by Professor Bühler, useful critical articles on the Chronicle appeared in the *Indian Antiquary* (Vols. 18 and 19) in 1885 A.D. written by Dr. E. Hultzech. There were more such notices by European and Indian Sanskrit scholars, each discussing particular passages or portions of the *Rajatarangini*, until the last decade of the 19th century. About this time, another eminent scholar, M.A. Stein, made a number of antiquarian tours of Kashmir, and came upon the codex which had been written by a Kashmiri scholar, Pandit Rajnaka Ratnakanta, probably about the third quarter of the 17th century, and which had important glosses and corrections by old hands. Assisted by Pandit Govind Kaul of Srinagar, Stein studied not only the old Sanskrit texts but the peculiar traditions of Kashmir, developed behind the mountain barriers separating the Valley from the rest of India, so as to arrive at a correct comprehension of Kalhana's narration. His Sanskrit text was published in 1892 A.D., under the patronage of the Kashmir Durbar, by the Education Society Press, Bombay.

About the same time, Pandit Durga Prasad (of Kashmir), also brought out his edition which was published by the Nirnaya Sagara Press, Bombay. Consequently, Stein translated the *Rajatarangini* into English prose in 1900. He followed Professor Bühler's specimen translation, "adopting a form of rendering that allows the interpreter not only to reproduce plainly the

meaning of the text, but also indirectly to indicate often the construction or other exegetical reasons underlying his version." This monumental, annotated edition (in two volumes) amply clarified the contents of the Chronicle for the first time.

The next important translation of the Chronicle was, as mentioned already, done by R.S. Pandit, who generally followed the Sanskrit text of Stein, with frequent references to the critical edition of Pandit Durga Prasad. R.S. Pandit, however, felt that Stein's "method of translation does not give an adequate conception of the work as a literary composition to readers unable to study the original". About his own translation, R.S. Pandit said that "barring the lacunae in the original text, it is complete and unexpurgated."

We have already quoted from Jawaharlal Nehru's foreword to R.S. Pandit's translation. It was written in Dehra Dun Jail in June 1934. Nehru mentioned the comment of S.P. Pandit (made "nearly half a century ago" from then) that the *Rajatarangini* was "the only work hitherto discovered in India having any pretensions to be considered a history", and added: "Such a book must necessarily have importance for every student of old Indian history and culture." He had this to say about R.S. Pandit's translation: "The translation has preferred a literal rendering, sometimes even at the cost of grace of language, and I think he has chosen rightly, for in a work of this kind exactitude is necessary." The value of the translation, along with notes and appendices, "bringing out noteworthy contributions made during the Vedic, Buddhist and Brahmanical periods of the history of Kashmir"[1], and vying in learning with those of Stein, persists, and it has stood the test of time.

Kalhana's place as a maker of Indian literature is secured by his only extant work, *Rajatarangini*, at once a literary masterpiece and a historical document. Not much is known of his life and work. An attempt is made in the following pages to glean from available sources facts about his life and times and to evaluate his contribution to Indian literature.

1. Sufi, G.M.D. : *Kashir*, Preface.

1

Kalhana and his Family

That few biographical facts are available about Kalhana is also true of many authors of his time and earlier days. It is a pity that there is no record of the life of the scholar-poet to whom we are bounden for our knowledge of the annals of ancient Kashmir. But some facts about Kalhana have been gleaned from his narrative by patient research. The information thus secured is much more than, say, obtained in the case of Kalidasa, about whom there are conflicting anecdotes.

The name Kalhana occurs in the colophons of the *Rajatarangini*, with which each of the eight books is concluded. Each colophon ascribes the composition to "Kalhana, the son of the great Kashmirian minister, the illustrious Lord Canpaka." His father, Canpaka, was a Kashmiri nobleman, who held the office of the Lord of the Gate (*Dvarpati*), or, commandant of the frontier defences, during the reign of the ill-fated King, Harsha. Kalhana wrote the introduction of his work in 1148-49 A.D. and completed it in the following year. Considering these dates, the repetition of Canpaka's name in the Chronicle as one of King Harsha's chief officials establishes the filial relationship of Kalhana with Canpaka. He is mentioned with esteem as *Dvarpati*; he is praised for his part in suppressing a Darad uprising on the frontier and for his being among the few officials who remained loyal to King Harsha until the doom that overtook him. Canpaka, it is explained, was not present at the catastrophe because the King had sent him on a special expedition. The dialogue between Canpaka and the unfortunate King, who

is later forced to flee the capital, and other incidents about the King's tragic death, bear out the son-father relationship through the very veracity of the narration. Only Kalhana does not seem to share Canpaka's affection for his royal master. Canpaka (viii, 2365) appears to be living about 1136 A.D.

Another close relative is also mentioned in the Chronicle. He is the younger brother of Canpaka, namely, Kanaka. He ingratiated himself into the favour of Harsha, taking lessons in music from the King, knowing that the King had a great love for music. Kanaka got well rewarded, to the tune of one lakh coins of gold from the King. The very munificence of the present indirectly underlines the high status of Kalhana's family. This conclusion links with another inference from the Chronicle that Kalhana never worked for a living—and did not know want or any lack of resource in his lifetime.

Kanaka, the Chronicle adds, remained faithful to the memory of his royal patron, and retired to Varanasi, after the King's death, to spend his last days in peace and meditation. As for Canpaka, the rather abrupt manner in which he is introduced (VII, 954) not only further identifies Kalhana with his father, but hints at Kalhana's naivete that introducing him to his contemporaries or giving further facts about a known personality was hardly necessary. The relevant verse reads: "At Nandikshetra, by spending every year seven days, Canpaka made fructuous the wealth he had acquired during that entire period." It is clear from the graphic accounts of the *Tirthas* in the *Rajatarangini* that Kalhana had accompanied his father, a fervent worshipper of the *Tirthas* of Nandikshetra, to the sacred places in his boyhood. Hence, there is no doubt that Kalhana's family was Brahmin by caste. Since the knowledge of Sanskrit was the *forte* of Pandits (of Brahmin descent), the deep learning evinced by him in the *Rajatarangini* is further proof of his descent, if one were needed. (Three centuries later, Jonaraja referred to Kalhana as *dvija*—twice-born.)

Kalhana's place of birth is indirectly inferred from the Chronicle. He mentions the meritorious act of Kanaka, his uncle, when he interceded in the nick of time to save a colossal statue of Buddha at Parihaspura, his birthplace, from a vandalistic fit of King Harsha. From the trend of the description, it looks as if Kanaka had been initiated into some form of Buddhist wor-

ship. It also gives a clue to Kalhana's own tolerant attitude towards Buddhism. That Parihaspura was the original home of the family of Kalhana is clear from the detailed descriptions of the sacred structures as well as the topography of the area in the Chronicle.

The family heritage of Kalhana was noble *par excellence*. Deeply impressed by the life and character of his father, he was proud of his birth and lineage. Though belonging to the Brahmin elite and attached to the Shaivite creed, Kalhana and his family were tolerant towards Buddhism. As a Brahmin, Kalhana was acquainted with the transcendental doctrines of Shaivism as well as the related Tantric cult. This is deduced from his respectful references to Bhatta Kalatta, one of the chief exponents of the Shaivism of Kashmir. He begins the Chronicle with a salutation to Shiva—"charming with the collective iridescence of jewels of snakes which adorn him"—in His manifestation as Lord Ardhanarishvara, "half of whom is united with his wife." The invocation is significant in so far as it confirms the prevalence of the Shaivite creed in Kalhana's own time.

Despite his family's close attachment to the Shaivite creed of Brahmins, Kalhana shows a friendly attitude towards Buddhism throughout his Chronicle. Kings from Ashoka down to Kalhana's day are admired for founding *Viharas*[1] and *Stupas* to propagate Buddhism. Foundations by private individuals are recorded with the same attention. "Kalhana does not hesitate to refer repeatedly to the Bodhisattvas or to Buddha himself as the comforter of all beings, the embodiment of perfect charity and nobility of feeling. They are to him beings of absolute goodness 'who do not feel anger even against the sinner, but in patience render him kindness.' "[2] He shows thorough familiarity with special points of Buddhist tradition and terminology. This was to be expected in a land where *Nilamatapurana*, the ancient religious authority on the Brahminical cult in the Valley, had prescribed the celebration of Buddha's birthday as a festival, when his statue was worshipped and the *chaityas* decorated. Kalhana's tolerance went further—it even extended to idol-brea-

1. The Chinese pilgrim, Ou-Kong, who had visited Kashmir in 759 A.D., found three hundred Buddhist convents in Kashmir.
2. Stein, M.A., *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Translated, Vol. I, Preface.

kers and iconoclasts—for as a historian he was an independent and dispassionate observer.

Kalhana's belief in *Karma*, similar to that of the Buddhists, is prominent in the Chronicle. There are repeated references in the *Rajatarangini* to Destiny or Providence. Elemental forces of ambition, passion and crime seemed to motivate human actions, in the totality cancelling each other out. And yet the ideal of each epoch appears to Kalhana to emerge out of the seeming chaos. Therefore, Kalhana has some observations to make on the mystery and allegory of life in the first verse of each *Taranga*, which sets the tone for the narrative in the canto. By the same token, while treating the panorama of nature, he makes philosophical generalisations. He often refers to *Pralaya*, the universal deluge, at the end of the *Kalpa*.

Not only was Kalhana tolerant in his religious make-up, he was singularly free of the evils of narrow dogma and nationalism. It was typical of Kalhana to express his admiration for the warriors of Bengal who undertook the rigorous journey to Kashmir to avenge the treacherous assassination of their king at Trigrami in the Valley. He praised "the brave men of Gauda" (Bengal), who laid down their lives: "By the showers of their blood was made resplendent their extraordinary devotion to the liege-lord and the earth became blessed."

Kalhana was no hero-worshipper; there are no glorified heroes or heroines in the *Rajatarangini*. Nor was Kalhana bitten by the caste-bug. He was a bitter critic of the priestly class and did not conceal his contempt for their interference in the affairs of state. He writes how caste or birth did not qualify an officer to hold any office, civil or military. The low-caste Dombas and the high-caste Brahmins both become soldiers, rising to the rank of generals. A warrior-king is mentioned to have married a Bania woman of Rohtak. Even untouchability had lost its sting during the Buddhist era—the liberal tradition persists to this day in the Valley. Though Kalhana had affinity with the official class through his family and position, he evinced no partiality for the officials—he even exposed the vices of the Kayasthas who were Brahmins by caste.

However reticent Kalhana may be about himself, there is considerable evidence in the Chronicle that points to his wide learning—his being well versed in the extant branches of tradi-

tional learning. Not only was he well acquainted with the standard works of poetry, such as the *Raghuvamasha* and *Meghaduta*, he had also studied the epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, both drawn upon by him for underlying similarities of recorded incidents. The legend surrounding the war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas as well as the related mythology appeared to Kalhana, as to his forebears and contemporaries, to constitute history. As Stein[1] puts it, "What distinguishes these epic stories to the Indian mind from events of historical times, is only their superior interest due to the glamour of a heroic age, and their record of sacred authority. We may safely surmise that the study of the sacred epics had directly influenced Kalhana in the choice of his task."

There is considerable evidence of Kalhana's literary training which equipped him well to play the role of the poet-historian, that was destined to leave a lasting impression on the literature and history not only of Kashmir but the whole of India. The many references he makes to poets and scholars of his time and the previous reigns testify to his well-informed background, and these have proved invaluable to the students of the history of Sanskrit literature. It is taken as certain that Kalhana had studied the *Vikramankandevacharita* by Bilhana, the fellow Kashmiri poet, whose work was composed about the eighth decade of the 11th century A.D. In this context, the reference to Kavi Kalyana, in *Srikanthacharita* by Mankha, a contemporary of Kalhana, assumes significance. Of the poetic skill of Kalyana, he says that it reflected like a mirror the whole perfection of the poetry of Bilhana; Mankha also mentions Kalyana's enthusiasm for the study of legends and stories. The reference could be to none other than Kalhana, which word itself is a Prakrit variant of the Sanskrit word, 'Kalyana'. Jonaraja in his commentary on the *Srikanthacharita* writes about Kalhana's deep interest in the *Kathas*, implying the stories of the *Mahabharata* and other epics. Thus, the identifications of Kalhana with 'Kalyana' (Sans. for "auspiciousness"), derived through Prakrit 'Kalhana', further establishes the learning and liberal background of Kalhana.

The characteristic traits of Kalhana, thus amply deduced from

1. Stein, A.M.: Translation of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, in the Introduction.

the narrative, acquire a particular significance in the context of circumstances and environment in which he was placed. We appreciate his grasp of contemporary events as well as his individualistic political opinions. The exactitude with which military operations are described shows that he was well-versed in the science of war and warfare. His close knowledge of the topography reveals that as a man of independent means he travelled about a lot. And above all persists the independence of judgement that Kalhana displays about events and persons of his time.

his retirement, after the death of Harsha, was entirely voluntary.

The Chronicle makes it abundantly clear that Kalhana did not hold any office under any of the rulers. He did not bask in the sun of any king though he seems to have had access to the royal courts throughout. There is nothing in the Chronicle to indicate that he followed the unwritten convention of praising a patron, for he had none. There is no hint or reference that he penned his compositions at the behest of Jayasimha (during whose reign he concluded the Chronicle) or any of his predecessors. The tame terminology in which he praises the attainments of Jayasimha looks like Kalhana doing the chores, keeping on the right side. He, however, points out the grave defects of Sussala, the father of Jayasimha, and unhesitatingly admires the valour of Bhikshacara whose career accounted for the troublous time that Jayasimha and his father h ad to face. "He, the one for extricating his troops from a critical position,was indefatigu-able, he never bragged, bore up with hardships; a brave man, the like of Bhikshacara was not to be found anywhere." (VIII, 1017). It is added in *Shloka* 1776 in the same *Taranga*, "Those, for whom he had been a halter during the prolonged disorder and the very cause of their complete ruination, eventually praised him, marvelling at his valour." Among other pretenders of his time, Bhoja alone elicited Kalhana's sympathy.

Having had ample opportunities to study Kashmiris, he portrays them realistically, without mincing words, for he was not merely a historian but a poet who loved the Sylvan Vale, its tall, snow-capped mountains, green meadows and limpid brooks and rivers. He vivifies the men and manners of his time, and the past lives again for us through his Chronicle.

Being a close observer, Kalhana could not fail to notice what he thought the lack of physical and moral courage of the then Kashmiris, particularly among the lower echelons of the society. Empty bragging of the Kashmiri soldiers is made the butt of ridicule—how, some overawed by the Turks, beat a hasty retreat, sometimes whole camps fleeing in disarray; and (T. VIII, 324) the grandee "melted away, like a dog, hiding his dagger which bore a semblance to the tail." It is apparent that Kalhana did not estimate highly the military valour of his countrymen and that he was disgusted with too many instances of treachery

that he came across among the warring princes in his own day. On the other hand, he has praise on several occasions for the bravery of the Rajaputras and mercenaries from the rest of India who propped up the warring princes.

At the same time, Kalhana notices the callous indifference of his compatriots to court intrigues and wars of succession among the rulers. He is critical of Damaras, the feudal landlords, who caused Harsha's downfall and were behind the political vicissitudes that overtook the Valley in Kalhana's lifetime. Though powerful rulers like Avantivarman and Didda tried to suppress the unruly Damaras and met with partial success, their continued sustenance came from the economic structure of the feudal society. The rise of landed aristocracy was inevitable in a society where the cultivator was a tenant of the feudal landlord who collected the revenues by means fair and foul and paid then annually to the royal officers. Kalhana mentions how some of the Damaras amassed large fortunes from the revenues of their lands. The coarseness and boorishness of these feudal tyrants is exposed by Kalhana, as also the oppression of Kayasthas, the petty officials. He also assesses the political acumen of Brahmin priests (or *Purohits*), who resorted to *Prayopavesas* (solemn fasts) to wheedle weak rulers into desired courses of action. On other occasions, he ridicules their self-assertion which was curiously compounded by by cowardice.

The people under Lalitaditya (and powerful rulers like him) lived like serfs. The feudal aristocracy, represented by the Damaras, already mentioned, and others, enjoyed the best things of life. The nobility and courtiers in the typical *bon viveur* style enjoyed the Kashmiri cuisine which is justly famous; they had "fried meat" and "delightful light wine cooled with ice and perfumed with flowers." The use of wine went back to olden times. The *Nilamatapurana* mentions the use of wine for ceremonial purposes. As for the common people, they subsisted on rice and *hakh* (Kashmiri greens), which too were not available to them in times of famine—none too few. The Chronicle evinces Kalhana's feeling for the poor and the underdog. In *Taranga* IV, 394-392, he speaks of the cruel, lascivious King Varaditya, who "delivered

by sale men to the Mlecchas",[1] and characterised the slave trade as "the practice worthy of Mlecchas."

The prosperity of the merchant trade that coincided with the foreign trade of Kashmir (at its best from the 7th to 9th century A.D., when Kashmir had suzerainty over her surrounding hilly states and the trade routes went as far as Central Asia) progressively declined from the 10th century downwards. In the result, much before Kalhana's time, the importance of the merchants as the most wealthy and powerful class of the State had started diminishing. Merchants mentioned in the *Rajatarangini* are "deceitful by nature." A satirical comment reads: "The merchants who have embezzled deposits show themselves ever eager to listen to the recital of sacred texts." Merchants had to resort to fraudulent practices because the Damaras had engaged themselves in trade.

Besides the persons engaged in agriculture and trade, there were also other classes who served the society. Mentioned in the *Rajatarangini* are the teachers, astrologers, physicians, labourers, businessmen, artisans, carters, workers of water wheels and the hand mills. Soldiers are aplenty. There were divisions and subdivisions amongst these occupational classes.

The officers in the king's service, who manned the administration, could be subdivided into two principal classes, the nobility and the bureaucracy—the latter, known as Kayasthas. As high officers of the State, the members of the nobility used to draw large salaries, some owning vast estates also. The Kayasthas included such specific officers as *grihakrityadhipati*, or, simply, *mahattama*, *paripalaka*, *margesa* or *margapati*, *saulkika*, *niyogi* and *diviras* of *nagara*, *grama* etc., whose duty one way or the other was to collect revenues and taxes. Though the Kayasthas received their salary from the royal treasury, they not unoften helped themselves to extra income in dubious ways. Kalhana says that during the reign of Jayapida, (IV, 629), the Kayasthas embezzled property of the hapless subjects, delivering to the king only the smallest fraction of what they had realised. They were

1. Mlecchas are also referred to in *Taranga* VIII as the tribes of the frontier, who were the allies of Prince Bhoja. That Mlecchas were not held in esteem is clear from the still current use of the word by Kashmiri Pandits for an unbeliever, who is unclean and uncouth. But Kalhana might also have referred to the Greeks by the term—see p. 53.

similarly oppressive during other reigns too, presumably because the regimes were short-lived and unstable and involved too many changes of personnel, new favourites being appointed whenever the throne changed the occupants.

There is no mention of Kayasthas in the first three *Tarangas* of the *Rajatarangini*. They are featured from the fourth *Taranga* onwards, in increasing measure, with new designations. With greater pressure on land, caused by the increase in population, and distribution of the available cultivable land among the people, the king had to appoint more officers to collect the revenue and taxes. After the fall of the Karkotas, when trade and commerce with foreign countries practically came to a standstill, the State had to depend for its income principally on the revenue of the land. The supervision of the landed estates, and exacting as much revenue from them as possible, entailed the employment of more Kayasthas.

Kalhana's assertion tha t the Brahmins were Kayasthas (VIII, 2383) is interesting for it shows that the term Kayastha did not denote any particular caste in ancient Kashmir. It appears that the office of Kayastha was open to all people, irrespective of caste or creed. Even a gardener (VII, 39-40) could become a Kayastha. A Kayastha holding a lower office could be promoted to a higher rank.

King Uccala was "devoted to his people" and "by nature was not avid for wealth" (*Taranga* VIII); he took steps to protect the people from the Kayasthas, the officials ("ready to kill and given to corruption"), rooting them out. Kalhana adds, depicting the plight of the Kayasthas:

> For, indeed, the officials like cholera, the colic and the wagering stakes, smite the world swiftly and are another epidemic for the subjects.
> 88
>
> The crab kills its father, the white ant destroys its mother but the ungrateful functionary, when he has obtained office, destroys everybody.
> 89
>
> ...The bureaucrat and the poison-tree, it is amazing, render the very ground, on which they prosper, difficult of access. 91
>
> ...Having deprived of office the Mahattma Sahela and many others, the king compelled them to wear dempen clothing in prison.
> 93

> ...He had another tied up nude to a cart, with the half of his head shaved and the braid of hair marked by dusting a mass of chirapowder. 97

> These officials in disgrace became notorious everywhere, through their nicknames acquired by the playing on clay drums and their decorated heads. 98

There were right-minded Kayasthas too whose actions were discreet and responsible. Once Lalitaditya (*Taranga* IV) was in cups, in his capital at Parihaspura. Seeing the lights of the old city, Pravarapura, in the distance, he ordered his ministers to have the city burnt down. They had the cavalry haystacks put on fire instead so that the drunken monarch thought that his order had been carried out. Next day, Lalitaditya eulogised them for having acted rightly, saying, "An oral order by me when I am intoxicated should never be carried out." Kalhana makes an observation which even modern bureaucracy could profit from :

> A curse on those officials who, seeking their own ends, emoluments and comfort, encourage in unseemly ar[illegible]nts the ruler who is master of the land, as one is master of a woman of the town, for the moment; in the world they who guard the king who is on the wrong track by force disregarding even their own lives—by those high-minded men this earth has been sanctified. 321

Though there were no castes as such, the *Rajatarangini* mentions several low castes—the Nisadas, Kiratas, Kaivartas, Dombas, Svapakas and the Chandalas. The Brahmins were the more privileged caste, accorded all the honours, ever since the time they came to the Valley from other parts. They were the ministers and councillors of the king. The military and political vocations were also theirs for the asking, though the majority earned their livelihood by teaching the sacred books or performing priestly functions. The priests of the temples were well feathered, enjoying revenues of villages attached to the temples by royal decree (II, 132; V, 58-62); sometimes they sold flowers, incense and others, temple-entry accessories to the people (V, 168).

Nisadas most probably were the aboriginal tribes. According to Kalhana, Kiratas, another low caste, subsisted in the forests.

by killing wild animals. He often mentions the Dombas as a caste of menials, sometimes associated with Chandalas[1]. Kalhana mentions Domba singers and musicians—they have survived as folk musicians—under the same name.

By and large, the four major traditional castes, as known in the rest of India, were unknown in Kashmir. There were no such castes as Kashattriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Kashmiris were divided into groups according to their professions. The Damaras, already described, were connected with the land. The industry and trade were in the hands of merchants, whose role has also been dealt with. Though the State had a hand in the system of distribution of wealth, the State interfered very little in private enterprise or property in ancient Kashmir. But the people, who were responsible for the production of wealth, were not left alone to enjoy the fruit of their hard labour; there were quite a few privileged people who shared it more or less, and this depended upon the system of the distribution of wealth.

Writing at a time when Asians confronted the crusaders, Kalhana describes the hosts of princes and potentates, with an entourage of Brahmins, courtiers and beautiful women with "moon-like faces", that came to Srinagar, the city founded by Ashoka near the older capital, Pravarsenapura. He mentions the landmarks of the city, which are still there to remind the reader of the bygone era of internecine warfare and court intrigues, relieved only by temple and religious foundations. The landmarks of the city are the Gopa Hill (the area now known as Gupkar), surmounted by the ancient temple of Jyeshtharudra (Shankaracharya Temple), the Sharika Parvat (Hari Parbat), and further afield "the marvellous temple of Martanda."

The *Rajatarangini* gives a good idea of the life of Kashmiri women. They received a good dose of liberal education in the first part of life spent in the father's house. They spoke both Sanskrit and Prakrit fluently. The great success attained by queens and other women in the public field presupposes that they received adequate instructions. In the manner of a liberal aesthete, Kalhana was in his own way an admirer of the

1. As for Chandalas, both Alberuni and Kalhana mention that they were used as hired assassins. No wonder the term 'Chandala' is still used by Kashmiris for an unclean, despicable person.

feminine figure. He loved the beauty of form of women, especially the beauty of shoulders, like Kalidasa. In the First *Taranga* (253), he refers to the daughter of the lord of Nagas, "the lady of superfine comeliness" whose hand was "like a lotus flower". The Brahmin's wife "with the lovely eyes" leaves "the golden imprint of palm with the beautiful tapering figures" on Nara who was infatuated by her. In *Taranga* VIII (366), describing Uccala's queens, Kalhana says: "Oh these women with their inscrutable hearts! the waviness of the mass of hair, the culminating coquetry of their eyes, the firmness of their rounded bosom, these lumped together reside in their innermost recess—no one can understand them!" In the manner of great poets, who wrote about the mystery of women, he adds about the queens, "Though given to unfaithfulness and killing their husbands, yet they step with ease into the fire. In no manner can one be sure of women."

It wasn't merely the beauty of women that elicited praise. Women were free agents—the Aryan recognition of the equality and freedom of women prevailed up to the 12th century A.D. It is probable that women in Kashmir had some property rights and independent legal status. It is interesting that there is no word in Sanskrit for *Purdah* ('screening' of women from the gaze of men), the concept and the practice imported into India by Muslims. Neither was there a word in the Sanskrit language for a *harem* or seraglio. The ruling princess of Kashmir, as in the rest of India, used to have a number of wives: they would reside in the *Antahpura* (interior apartments) or the *Suddhanta* (pure interior). Kalhana's Chronicle bears i t out that there was no seclusion of women, nor were they segregated or veiled in any manner. Following ancient law and tradition, Kalhana records how the queens of Kashmir were sprinkled with sacred waters alongside their royal consorts at the coronation, and that the queens had their councillors, their allocated funds, and separate treasurers. Aided by her councillors, the queen would take active part in the affairs of the government. No wonder then that queens like Didda, Sagandha, Suryamati and others, were the peers of men in statecraft. Even women of lesser status than that of a queen are enumerated by Kalhana to have taken leading part in the affairs of state. Caste considerations did not matter in the selection of the royal spouse. King Chakravarman

(923-933 A.D.) married an untouchable Domba woman and made her "the premier queen who enjoyed the privileges among royal ladies of being fanned by the yak-tail" (V, 387). Kalhana relates how she entered in state the sacred temple of Vishnu, Ramasvamin, near Srinagar, and how her relatives were appointed ministers. In fact, the supporters of this marriage became ministers of subsequent kings also. Kalhana had no strictures against illustrious monarchs like Lalitaditya, and his brother Chandrapida, who were the king's sons by a "divorcee", a Baniya woman hailing from Rohtak, near Delhi.

The widow was expected to lead a pure, unattached life; no luxuries, including ornaments or gorgeous attire, were permitted to her (VIII, 1969). One passage mentions the widow (not the sons) becoming heir to the immovable property of the dead husband. Kalhana refrains from an opinion on such women; obviously they did not perform *Sati* (burning themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands). He mentions the vogue of *Sati* going back to early days, and cites the cases of Surendravati and two other queens performing *Sati* with the king after the demise of Shankaravarman (V, 266)—and, likewise, queens Trailokyadevi, Suryamati and Kumudalekha, respectively, ascending the pyre, as did Jayamati a few days after Uccala's body was cremated (VIII, 368). The system of *Sati* was not confined to the royal family alone. Kalhana testifies that sometimes courtesans and concubines became *Satis* for their paramours, whether kings or ministers or other high officials. In *Taranga* VIII (448), there is mention of Dilhabhattarka cremating herself with her brother.

There was the other side of the coin. The *Rajatarangini* is replete with instances of gross immorality prevailing among some classes of women. The Indian custom of dedicating girls (*devadasis*) to temples for singing and dancing was prevalent in Kashmir too. Kalhana mentions the privilege enjoyed by the kings to take any *devadasi* from a temple for their harem.

Clearly perceiving the vices of women, Kalhana exposes these relentlessly as well as the time-servers who pandered to their whims. The youthful Sugandhaditya (*Taranga* V) gratified the two queens of the king "like a stallion the bevy of mares":

> He served these two alternately, to highten the pleasures of like a single feeding vessel between two pauper women, day ...after day. 285

> To gain the throne fort heir respective sons, the two vying with one another granted their own minister the intimacy of sexual intercourse with an honorarium of gifts of treasure. 286

Queen Didda (*Taranga* VI) was a veritable bundle of contradications: she had a number of Viharas built but these acts of piety were offset by her "longing for pleasures" and lust for power. When she had her infant grandson murdered through "use of sorcery", Kalhana had this to say by way of trenchant comment:

> Although residing in the sacred pool and observing the vow of silence, the Timi fish is addicted to eating up its kind; the peacock while living solely on drops from the cloud daily swallows the snakes; the stork ostensibly given to meditations makes a meal of the unsuspecting fishes which approach the edge; even while acting piously there can be no certitude about a relapse into evil in the case of sinners. 309

Kalhana pronounces "shame upon women of lowly mind!" when on the death of Kalasa (*Taranga* VII), his favourite mistress, Kayya, yielded to a village yokel:

> Her body worthy to be enjoyed by a king and which through the habits of a life of luxury had become radiant, she made the object of enjoyment of a villager; a curse on low-minded women !

King Ananta, egged on by his "masterful wife" to various projects (*Taranga* VII), speaks out his mind about women:

> "Self-respect, glory, sovereignty, power, intellect and wealth, I who have been obedient to the wife, alas ! what have I not lost ? 423

> "In vain have people considered women to be the appendages of men; in the end it is the man who are the playthings of women. 424

> "...Some women have deprived their husbands by acts of sorcery or beauty; some of strength, some of understanding, some of virility and others of life." 426

Lest the foregoing give an impression that Kalhana was a misogynist of sorts, we reproduce (from *Taranga* VII) his description comparable to the best of Kalidasa, of the brilliant bevy of women in King Harsha's court:

> Setoff with the golden leaf of the *Ketaka* (ornament), the bun coiffure was decked with long flower-garlands, the tremulous blossoms of the *Tilaka* (pendants) embraced the lovely forehead patch; the line of collyrium joined the corners of the eyes to the ears; bows of string woven with gold were tied at the end of the tresses which were worn in plaits; the long tail end of the lower garments kissed the surface of the floor; the brassiere which traced the curve of the breasts concealed the upper half of the arms; with their smile bright like the powder of camphor, the ladies with sensitive brows were on the move to and fro; when they wore men's dress, they bore the charm of the god of Love in disguise. 928-31

That Kashmiris were highly superstitious—more so than many Indians in other parts of India—is well-known. They believed in sorcery and other arts of black magic affecting the lives of individuals. Kalhana's narrative proves how wide-spread the practice of witchcraft was in ancient Kashmir. He mentions the kings who became victims of the black magic. It appears that Kalhana shared the popular belief in the efficacy of witchcraft. This may account for his predisposition to give credence to supernatural powers in determining the events related by him.

3

Kalhana as a Poet

The *Rajatarangini* is important as a historical record, furnishing a mass of details about ancient Kashmir. But Kalhana's Chronicle is neither Voltaire's *History of Russia* nor Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. His was not only a valuable contribution to history, but also pre-eminently a work of art (*Kavya*). He looked upon himself not merely as a historian but also as a Kavi, a seer-poet. Defining his task in the introductory chapter, with which the work opens, Kalhana observed :

> Worthy of praise is that power of true poets, whatever it may be, which surpasses even the stream of nectar, inasmuch as by it their own bodies of glory as well as those of others obtain immortality. Who else but poets, resembling *Prajapatis* and able to bring forth lovely production can place the past times before the eyes of men !

That Kalhana sets out the qualifications of a Kavi at the commencement of his work underlines the relation that he visualises between his art as a Kavi and the subject-matter of his long narrative.

Kalhana had had a rigorous literary training. He was schooled in the study of classical literature and had mastered the elaborate science of grammar and rhetoric. He had a passion for the great epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, as well as the old historical treatises. He, however, quoted more from the *Mahabharata* than from any other epic. The *Harshachrita* of Bana—the well-known historical romance describing the exploits

of King Harshavardhana of Kanauj—and the *Vikramankadeva-charita* of Bilhana seem to have influenced Kalhana considerably. In the Chronicle, he profusely thanks the bygone members of his poetic fraternity from whom he has imbibed a lot: "Worthy of obeisance is that indefinable virtue of good poets which is superior (in sweetness and immortality) to a stream of nectar, whereby they preserve their own bodies of glory as well as those of others."

Mankha, Kalhana's contemporary poet, has noted that Kalhana knew no limit to his enthusiastic devotion to the study of stories and legends. Kalhana was intimately acquainted with the art of government, economics, astronomy, and other sciences and arts, including erotics. As a historian, however, Kalhana stresses art and humanistic studies rather than economic life; still, there are accurate descriptions of food prices, currency, taxation and famine. There are many references to ancient Indian lore and mythology, e.g., the legends of the descent of the Ganga (*Gangavatarana*) and of the churning of the ocean (*Samudramanthana*). According to R.S. Pandit, Kalhana's references to flora and fauna of India which are not to be found in Kashmir—like the mango, palm tree, the lion and the crocodile—show that he was steeped in the traditional learning of India.

A *Kavya* (a *Charita* or heroic poem) in form and conception, the *Rajatarangini* consists of about eight thousand *shlokas* (stanzas) classified under eight *Tarangas* (waves). It is, however, different from other *Charitas* because Kalhana has offered a connected narrative of the ruling dynasties of Kashmir from the earliest times to his own. Possessing wide scholarship and enthused by the poetic grandeur and human interest in the epics, Kalhana undertook to narrate the history of his land in the manner of celebrated masters. He adopted the metrical form advisedly, not merely as a form of expression but as a literary, cum-historical postulate of his time. He embellished the Chronicle with occasional elaborate rhetorical ornaments.

The *Rajatarangini*, however, is free from the tiresome description of seasons, scenery and continual similes, which had become hackneyed cliches of *Mahakavyas*. Avoiding these ornate embellishments, the Chronicle for the most part has a refreshing directness and simplicity of diction. Kalhana makes it clear that he is not deliberately spurning the accepted literary tradition.

Nor was he wanting in the skill of poetic 'amplification'. We have already noted that he did use the conventional rhetorical ornamentation parenthetically. It has to be remembered that Kalhana esteemed his subject not so much for its inherent value as for the opportunities it offered for conventional treatment as a *Kavya.* "Though in view of the narrative diversity could not be secured by means of amplification, still there may be found in it something that will please the right-minded." But Kalhana's digressions are far less than, say, those in the *Harshacharita* and *Vikramankadevacharita* because he was concerned with the "length of the narrative." Dr. H.H. Wilson[1] says about the *Rajatarangini*: "Like the mass of Hindu compositions on all subjects, it is written in verse, and as a poem it contains many passages of merit, both in sentiment and style." Dr. Wilson whose appreciation appeared in *Asiatic Researches,* as far back as 1825, said in the introduction: "The only Sanskrit composition so far discovered to which the title of history can with any propriety be applied is the *Rajatarangini*, a history of Kashmir."

Kalhana admits that the subject-matter of his narrative influenced his work as a poet. The rules of *Alamkarashastra* make it imperative for a *Kavya*, or, its main parts, to portray a characteristic 'Rasa' or dominant sentiment. Mammata, the Kashmiri rhetorician, and the author of *Kavya Prakasa*, had said that one of the aims of *Kavya* was to teach the art of life (*Vyavahara-vidya*). *Kavya* was defined as "the speech the soul of which is *Rasa*." In all there were eight *Rasas* : *Sringara* (love), *Hasya* (merriment), *Karuna* (pathos), *Raudra* (wrath), *Vira* (martial), *Bhaya* (terror), *Vibhatsa* (repulsion) and *Adbhuta* (marvel). These comprised the essence of poetry. Kalhana followed Mammata so far as these *Rasas* were concerned, but he added one more, *Shanta* the ninth *Rasa*, meaning inner calm, or the sentiment of resignation. About this *Rasa*, which dominates his work, Kalhana asks: "If a poet can realise with his genius things which everybody cannot comprehend, what other indication is wanted that he has the divine light?" He requests the reader to be patient, not to pass judgement too soon.

The form of *Kavya* chosen by Kalhana determines the style

1. Wilson, H. H. *The Hindu History of Kashmir*, reprint, Sushil Gupta (India) Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, 1960.

of his chronicle. Metaphors, similes, puns and poetic figures revealing the artistry of a Kavi are abundantly scattered through the *Rajatarangini*. To suit the changing scene, the metres are changed at the beginning and the end of the cantos. Kalhana's skill in embellished narrative is shown in descriptions like those of Yudhisthira's departure into exile, Chakravarman's or Sussala's triumphal entry into the capital, Bhikshacara's last fight and Harsha's death. He deserves the praise of R. S. Pandit comparing him to Aeschylus and Homer as "a poet of veracity and universality." In Kalhana's pen pictures the past of Kashmir is gloriously vivified and recreated. It is his skill as a Kavi—the outstanding merit of his poetic composition—which has saved from oblivion the ancient history of Kashmir.

To illustrate Kalhana's matchless mastery in narration, let up quote him, for the above-mentioned dramatic episodes, from the Chronicle.[1]

Yudhisthira I, forced by his ministers to give up the throne, was "permitted by them to leave his own country". The flight of the King and his entourage is thus described in First *Taranga*:

> Proceeding along lovely mountain paths the king, yielding to fatigue, rested under trees; sitting for a while and then moving on he forgot his great sufferings; anon awakened by shouts of the vulgar which reached his ears from afar, he was seen dejected, the mind sinking in an abyss like the waters of a cataract. 369
>
> After crossing forests heavily perfumed with the scent of many varieties of creepers and herbs and the mountain streams with boulders, which were slippery with moss, his queen, whose slim figure had the semblance of a lovely lotus plant, becoming weary, would place her limbs on his lap and faint. 370
>
> From the spur of the mountain on the frontier while the royal ladies offered handfuls of flowers as a leave-taking, even the birds resting in their own nests in the caverns of the mountains rushed down in excitement in flocks, and, spreading their wings and bending their beaks towards the earth's surface, began to cry. 371
>
> The royal ladies, who had tied on their bosoms the upper

1. The quotes, featured on this and other pages, are from R. S. Pandit's (prose) translation of the Chronicle.

> garment which had slipped from their hends, watching their own land from a distance, placed their hands on the foreheads and wept tears which streamed like a rivulet on the way. 372

The beauty of the original verses—remarkable for their melodious diction and mellifluous qualities—has suffered somewhat in the prose translation, but the portrayal of the dominant *Rasa* (mood) of *Karuna* (pathos), can still be compared with the renderings of great Sanskrit writers, whether poets or dramatists, or with Shakespeare. The same mood, highly evocative, is predominant in the narrativè (*Taranga* VII) of the death of King Harsha, treacherously killed by Damaras in a hut where he had taken refuge:

> Parrying the king's weapon as he was striking, that gendarme swiftly dealt two blows of the dagger on this chest. 1711
>
> "O Maheshvara!" after uttering twice these words, life having gone out; he fell dead on the ground like a tree cut at the root. 1712
>
> Having fled and taken refuge such as would befit a thief, though he had been a supreme potentate, he found such a death in a dwelling-house. 1713
>
> No other king was seen in this age who like him had been full of prosperity and in no other case a humiliating funeral like his was seen. 1714
>
> Or perhaps it was due to just one thing—aversion to war—whereby the exalted position charming in every way of that high-minded king was shattered. 1715
>
> ...Deserted by his servants, and his dynasty destroyed, by some official of the timber warehouse, named Gauraka, he, naked and like a pauper, was consigned to the fire. 1727

Mentioning that "not one of his bevy of mistresses wailed for Harsha" and none of the retainers "either followed him in death or retired to a sancturay", Kalhana, in the penultimate *shloka* of the *Taranga*, makes a philosophic observation on the transience of human experiences:

To begin with there is nothing, and certain it is that hereafter there is nothing during the interval; by chance man reacts swiftly to the controlling states of pleasure and pain. Like an actor, without head and feet, having acted his part repeatedly, a particular human being disappears behind the screen of existence—nor do we know where he goes! 1731

The narration of the triumphal entry of Chakravarman into the capital city of Srinagar, after the defeat of the Tantrin mercenaries, and the slaying of a brave prince by a sycophant, (*Taranga* V), in the *Vira* (martial) *Rasa*, illustrates the artistry of Kalhana as a Kavi:

Then on the next day as the virile Sambhuvardhana was organising the Tantrins although they had been broken, meanwhile joined by the grandees, ministers, Ekangas and palace favourites, with the cheering troops, who had come up by different routes prevading the horizon; with his noble charger proudly curvetting in the centre of the horse guards, raising the helmet when it slipped with the left hand which held the bridle; the ear-rings lit up by the glinting hilt which was held in the other hand made moist with perspiration; his face terrifying with the knitting of the eyebrows, being irritated by the pressure on the neck of his high and stiff armour; threatening in bursts of anger the plunderers, who had looted the shops and reassuring the affrighted citizens with signs of the head and the eye, while the rattle of his kettle-drums hindering the benedictory pronouncements of the citizens rent the hearing, Chakravarman, respledent in military triumph, made his entry into the city. 341-347

When flushed with victory, he had occupied the lion-throne Bhubhata, having manacled Sambhuvardhana, brought him from somewhere. 348

In front of the king this impious man, to demonstrate loyal devotion, slew like a Chandala him (Sambhuvardhana) who had closed his eyes from fear of the sword stroke. 349

Two *Rasas*, *Karuna* and *Vira*, almost coalesce in the superb narrative of Bhikshacara's last fight (*Taranga* VII). Some of the following verses could compare favourably with the classical heroic verse, whether of east or the west:

While Bhikshacara, lion-like, was breaking through the cage of arrows, from the terrace heavy showers of stones were then poured by the Khasas. 1762

> As he was retreating the terrible showers of stones battered his body and an arrow penetrated his side and smashed his liver. 1763

> After taking three steps he, of a sudden, collapsed making the earth tremble—at the same time removing the tremor of his enemy which since a long time had been on the increase. 1764

> Bhikshacara being slain in the company of men of high lineage was brilliant like a mountain, with trees in flower, struck by lightning. 1767

> Among such a large circle of royal personages was this descendant of Harsha—Bhikshu obtained not disgrace but the highest place of honour. 1768

> Providence ever unfriendly towards him was even at the end unfalteringly courted by him and, in truth, acknowledged its own defeat. 1769

> What was he, poor fellow, as compared with former king who had vast resources ? They were, however, nothing compared to him, judged by the brave deeds done at the end. 1770

> The tremor of the eyes, the quiver of the brows and the smile on his lips did not fade for several *Nalikas* as if the head were alive. 1777

> One part of him sought the heaven in the company of the Apsaras while the body, the other part on the earth, entered the fire, knowing the earth and water to be cold. 1778

Earlier on, King Bhikshacara, though deserted by his turncoat feudatories, ministers and soldiers, was playing at dice to while away the time, and was "impatient at the delay of the assassins and eager for the struggle". The portrait of the interpid warrior, who knew for sure that he had lost the day, is a memorable pen picture:

> His dark locks of hair were thinned by prolonged anxieties, the hem of his military uniform fluttered like a gay pennon as if it were his waving ensign; with the lustre of his mother-of-pearl pendants which danced against the cheeks, and the beauty of the sandal emollient which gleamed like his proud smile, he appeared at the finale of an amazing career to have overcome defeat by kicking it with his feet; his sword, eyes and the lower garments

scintillated like fire brands, with the saffron coloured nether garments and the quivering corners of his pale under lip which in front was firmly set, he was comparable to an intrepid lion with a bushy mane clinging to his shoulder; with quick, graceful and firm strides which characterised his movements and which harmonized gracefully with the manifold play of eye, will and feet he was of noblesse the correct deportment personified, an ornament of self-assurance, the endless and unceasing pride of those for whom honour is fortune. Thus did all the people who had turned their faces towards him behold Bhikshu, unmindful of his impending fall, stepping forth to meet his enemies. 1744-1750

Restored to the throne of Kashmir, in 1121 A.D., Sussala "made a sudden appearance before the capital unmolested by his opponents." (*Taranga* VIII, 497) His entry as victor provides the peg for another *Vira Rasa* portrayal:

Boiling over with rage like Death, his body tanned by the burning sun, Sussala with his face covered by his long beard and knitted brows, his eye-balls rolling in anger and nostrils wide-open, publicly threatened in the streets and the forum of Srinagar, there and then, the perfidious soldiers led by the cavaliers, who appeared before him, while he cursed them and the others who had been routed. At the groups of the residents of the capital, who were shouting blessings and showering flowers, but who formerly had wronged him, he threw a glance of contempt. Over his shoulders he had just thrown his armour which he wore négligé. His locks, which had slipped from below his helmet, he wore grey with dust and likewise his eyelashes; his sword was in the scabbard as he rode his curvetting charger in the centre of the serried ranks of his horsemen with drawn swords. With the vault of the sky reverberating with slogans of victory and his troops wild and jubilant with the rattle of his kettle-drums, Sussala made his entry into Srinagar. 947-953

Kalhana also eulogises another kind of heroism, of "the brave men of Gauda" (Bengal), the liegemen of the King of Gauda, who had been murdered by the orders of Lalitaditya. The followers of the king, as Kalhana recounts in the Fourth *Taranga*, "mustered and surrounded the abode of the god who had been the surety" and, denied entrance by the priests,

Flushed with martial pride they secured the silver statue of Ramasvamin and mistaking it for Parihasakesava pulled it down and reduced it to powder. 327

> And reducing it to particles they scattered it in all the direction while they were being slain at every step by the troops who had come out of Srinagar. 328
>
> These dark men, splashed with blood, fell to the ground when slain and appeared like stone fragments from a hill of antimony gleaming with red liquid mineral. 329
>
> By the showers of their blood was made resplendent their extra-ordinary devotion to the liege-lord and the earth became blessed. 330

Kalhana's observations on the heroic sacrifice of the faithful followers of the king, who came to Kashmir all the way from Bengal to avenge their master's death, is contained in a longer *shloka*, replete with apt metaphor:

> The peril from the thunderbolt ceases on account of the diamond, prosperity comes through the ruby, all kinds of poisons are allayed by the emerald: thus each of the precious stones does its work through its specified inherent power, but by jewel-like men, on the other hand, who are endowed with immeasurable greatness, what is difficult to achieve? 331

"A danger when it befalls suddenly causes gloom when one is in the thick of it, there is no such feeling; water does not feel quite so chilly when one is immersed in it as when dropped on the hand," is another profound observation (VIII, 1097) about King Sussala, who preserves his poise in the midst of battles. The earlier verse (1095), "And during the various encounters, the King himself sauntered nonchalantly like a Brahmin householder during a festival from room to room", could well be an object lesson to a harassed head of state in the modern days!

4

Kalhana as a Historian

Kalhana did not belong to that order of Brahmin Pandits or Kavis who were compelled by poverty or ambition to lay their talents at the feet of vain monarchs. By custom and literary tradition, Indian authors, particularly the court poets, showered praise and flattery on their royal patrons; the *Rajatarangini* offers negative evidence on this point. Nor is Kalhana's Chronicle merely a collection of old legends and myths like the *Shahnama* of Firdausi.

On the role of the historian, Kalhana says: "That man of merit alone deserves praise whose language, like that of a judge, in recounting the events of the past, has discarded bias as well as prejudice." Living up to this standard, Kalhana's standpoint as the historian is that of an unbiased chronicler.

"Facts are sacred", said C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian* fame, when, obviously, he had journalism in mind. Journalism at best is current history, but the dictum is even more relevant to history. Kalhana's own statement evinces his regard for facts: "That virtuous poet alone is worthy of praise who, free from love or hatred, ever restricts his language to the exposition of facts."

What he thought of the materials—about 2,333 years of ancient history—that were at his disposal, is best conveyed in Kalhana's own introductory verses, thus rendered into prose by R.S. Pandit :

The oldest, extensive works, containing the royal chronicles, have

> been lost in consequence of the work of Suvrata, who condensed them in his narrative in order that their contents might be easily remembered. Suvrata's poem, though it has acquired fame, is not easily understood, being difficult, owing to a pedantic show of learning.
>
> Owing to some strange want of attention there is not a single part of Kshemendra's *Chronicle of Kings*, that is free from mistakes, though it possesses the merit of poetry. But his claim to be heard he bases upon the two facts, viz., first that he examined and compared a large number of works on the ancient history of Kashmir; and second, that he used inscriptions of former kings, genealogical tables, and works forming memoirs of famous persons.
>
> I have examined eleven works of former scholars which contain chronicles of the kings, as well as the doctrine of the sage Nila (i.e., the *Nilamatapurana*).
>
> The edicts issued at the coronation of former kings, inscriptions on ancient objects with which those kings were connected, laudatory scrolls containing genealogical l sts, and memoris of renowned personages having been examined, I have removed all trouble caused by errors.

Thus Kalhana mentions and reviews earlier chronicles. The long works of older days, containing histories of the kings of Kashmir, no longer existed in a complete state. Kalhana ascribes their loss in part to the composition of Suvrata, who has condensed the earlier chronicles in a handbook. What was the *raison d'etre* of the *Rajatarangini* if 11 or more works had already been written on the ancient kings of Kashmir? The answer is furnished by Kalhana that there was no continuous and complete chronicle from the time of Gonanda III, and that he wished to "give a connected account of where the narrative of past events has become fragmentary in many respects." It is well known how in India the appearance of a handy abstract contributed to the loss of earlier works on a subject. For the king and the commoner, Kalhana wanted to point out the moral of many of the events of the saga: "Therefore let this *Rajatarangini*, which is beautiful with a vivid spring of *rasa* sentiment be imbibed with your ears which are like mother-of-pearl."

The *Rajatarangini* comprises in eight cantos of Sanskrit

verse the history of the various dynasties which ruled Kashmir from the early period down to the time of Kalhana. Allowing for the endary character of some of the events in the first three books—actually Kalhana was faithfully passing on the ancient traditions of Kashmir—Kalhana's work, ever since it came to light in 1835 A.D., has stood the test of time as well as that of historical criticism. The detailed record of the history of Kalhana's own time was based in the main on personal contacts with the leading men of his own day. This fact makes the rather lengthy narrative of the eight canto valuable to the students of history.

Being also an antiquarian, Kalhana drew upon such original historical documents, including royal grant and charters, as Kashmir could furnish. From dedicatory inscriptions in temples, he obtained the exact data about the foundations of the temples and the origin of particular sacred images.

The eminent historian, Professor R. C. Mazumdar[1], gives credit to Kalhana for anticipating the modern critical method of historical research: "This is the only work in ancient Indian literature that may be regarded as an historical text in the true sense of the word. The author has not only taken great pains to collect his material from the existing chronicles and other sources, but, at the beginning of h s work, he has set down a few general principles for writing history which are remarkably far in advance of his age. Indeed, these may be regarded as anticipating, to large extent, the critical method of historical research which was not fully developed till the 19th century."

Whatever the shortcomings of some portions of *Rajatarangini*, it is an important historical work, admittedly important in the context of Kashmir as well as tha t of India. We may also quote Stein from the introduction to his translation of the work: "The interest of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* for Indian history generally lies in the fact that it represents a class of Sanskrit composition which comes nearest to the chronicles of Medieval Europe and of the Muhammadan East. Together with the later Kashmir chronicles which contain Kalhana's narrative it is practically the sole extant specimen of this class...Kalhana nowhere claims the merit of originality for the plan and form of his work. On the

1. Mazumdar, R. C., Ed. *The Vedic Age*, P. 49.

contrary, he refers to various earlier compositions on the history of Kashmir kings which he had used. But none of these older works has come down to us. Nor has Sanskrit literature in any part of India preserved for us remains of chronicles similar to the *Rajatarangini* though indications of their former existence have come to light in various quarters."

5

System of Chronology

The *Rajatarangini* suffers from a serious shortcoming in regard to chronology. In the first three books, while the length of individual reigns is mentioned, no precise dates are given. The figures do not tally when Kalhana adds to the number of years that each ruler is supposed to have reigned.

Proper dates are indicated by Kalhana from the death of Chipata-Jayapida (813 A.D.) onwards—beginning with verse 703 of the *Taranga* IV. These are expressed in the Laukika era which was customarily in use in Kashmir from ancient times. (The Laukika era can be exactly worked out with reference to the Christian era.) R. S. Pandit writes in the 'Invitation' to his translation of the Chronicle : " . . . The first date is the year 3889 of the Laukika era (813-824 A.D.). There can be no doubt that Kalhana's history after this date is a faithful and accurate record and the defective chronology of the ancient period is due to the errors of the early chroniclers."

In the fifth book, after the advent of the Utpala dynasty, the beginning and conclusion of each rule is given in the form of a statement of year, month and day. These dates can be taken to be reliable on the whole; presumably, these are taken from some contemporary records. But historians lack the wherewithal to test their accuracy by independent data.

Exact indication of chronological succession is kings is wanting until Kalhana comes to the latter part of the 18th century A.D. Exact dates are conspicuous by their absence even when Kalhana is writing about his own time. The time factor is, again,

missing, even in the case of events which Kalhana considers important and describes at length. Sometimes he gives just the month only, leaving the reader guessing the year.

Thoroughly acquainted with the topography of Kashmir, Kalhana's local references are exact and clear. "It is chiefly Kalhana's merit that we can restore the ancient topography of Kashmir in fuller detail than perhaps that of any other Indian territory of similar extent," (Stein). Thus, a close relationship is established between the study of the *Rajatarangini* and the ancient geography of the Valley.

Kalhana is also meticulous in paying attention to genealogy. Obviously, he was aware of the significance of giving the origin of family of each and every important person who dominated the events of his or her time. This has considerably eased the comprehension of the complicated affairs of state in the last two books. Regular pedigrees are given about the more important celebrities.

We have the genealogy of Lalitaditya, the most illustrious monarch of the Karkota dynasty, who conquered one kingdom after another in different parts of India. Although the duration of the region of Lalitaditya (724-761 A.D.) as given by Kalhana has been accepted as correct, some scholars are not sure of the date being accurate. Actually, the date has not been given by Kalhana and has been fixed as the result of calculation. There is a snag in the calculation as is evident from the chief materials from which the chronology is deduced. These data are: the date of Kalhana himself, Saka 1070 (1148 A.D.); the date of Gonanda III, who ruled 2330 years before Saka 1070; and, lastly, the names as well the durations of the reigns of the kings that ruled between these two points of times. Kalhana's own date (i.e., of writing the Chronicle) can be assumed to be correct, but the same veracity cannot be extended to the period between Gonanda III and Kalhana, and to the durations of the reigns of the kings that had passed up to the time of Lalitaditya.

The chronology of Lalitaditya and other Karkotas has been accepted for working purposes though it is seriously contradicted by the entries in the Chinese Annals of the Tang dynasty. There is discrepancy of at least 25 years and Stein came to the conclusion that the rulers of this dynasty should be advanced by a similar number of years. This leads to another snag. The rule

of the Karkota dynasty would be brought forward to 880 A.D. when we know for certain that Avantivarman was ruling in Kashmir. The only explanation we are left with is that Kalhana gave a longer reign to some kings of the Karkota dynasty—hence the unresolved problem.

There is, however, a consensus among historians that the pre-Karkota portion of the history in the Chronicle is not quite reliable in some parts. There are period of reign whose duration (viz., that of Ranaditya, stretching to 300 years) is patently inadmissible. Miraculous events are described which, to say the least, are improbable. But, as R. S. Pandit[1] says, "As yet no inscriptions, coins, chronicles, or independent evidence of any other kind has been found, which has proved beyond doubt that any given part of Kalhana's narrative, though probably containing many faults, is wrong...Nor had any proof been adduced to show that those faults are the result of Kalhana's handling of the previous contemporary chronicles and other materials which he used, and of the latter."

Hence, it has been argued that the dates of all kings should not be vitiated when we know for a fact that Kalhana was judiciously using older chronicles by the writers of his predecessors. It is possible that he guessed or computed the date of one or more of the obscure kings about whom there was no detailed record. Independent evidence has established that Kalhana's dates in the later chapters—particularly the fifth, sixth, seventh and eight—have been proved to be correct, whereas for the reigns of the early kings he was faithfully transcribing the ancient traditions of Kashmir, as also consulting the previous chronicles and the current inscriptions and coins. His statement that the Karkotas had come into power after the Gonandas in 596 A.D. has been confirmed by Hieun Tsiang (who visited Kashmir in 631 A.D. as General Cunningham has established), according to whom the *ki-li-to* (by which name the Karkotas were known to the Chinese) ruled the Valley, *after* many centuries of rule by the Gonandas, and he adds specifically that the king did not have much faith in Buddhism.

Hence, R. S. Pandit joined issue with the statement of the

1. Pandit, R. S.. Trans: *Rajatarangini*, Sahitya Akademi, 1968 edition; Appendix A, Pp. 720-21.

great indologist, Bühler, who had observed that the manuscript of Kalhana was not a satisfactory state. The comment by R.S. Pandit[1] clinches the issue of Kalhana's chronology, and is worth quoting :...“At least until the text of that admittedly valuable work—the only historical compilation of any pretensions that has yet come to light—has been carefully edited and restored to its original purity by competent and patient hands, it will be only reasonable to expect that, after all that some great scholars have written about it, we should suspend our judgement as to its historical value, even in regard to its earlier parts, and though, failing independent evidence, we might hesitate to accept its correctness in some parts, and even ignore stories as merely mythical, we should not be prepared to reject all it says, even in its earlier portions, until and unless independent evidence proves that everything contained in it is incorrect.” Kalhana himself has given unmistakable indications that the story becomes almost legendary as it goes back towards antiquity but assumes a real historical characters in what were modern times to him.

1. *Ibid.*

6

Kalhana as Narrator

History is the product of two elements: the past or what is left of it (in material and immaterial form), and the imaginative skill—at the time of writing—employed in its reconstruction. The sources available to the historian are of necessity external to him. He cannot add to or alter them except by fabrication or forgery. In his introduction to the Chronicle, from which we learn about his sources, Kalhana does not commit himself as to the relative value he attached to them. None of the earlier chronicles drawn upon by Kalhana are available for comparison. To evaluate Kalhana as a narrator and assess his concept of history, we have to depend on internal evidence.

Stories of miracles and legends which formed the tradition of his day are related in a manner which shows that Kalhana shared the ingenuous credulity from which they had arisen. "Manifest impossibilities, exaggerations and superstitious beliefs such as which we must expect to find mixed up with historical reminiscences in popular tradition, are reproduced without a mark of doubt or critical misgiving." While this assessment by Stein may be right, but it should be said to the credit of Kalhana that he does refer to doubting Thomases of his day whose minds are swayed by doubts in regard to the miraculous deeds of Meghavahana and other ancient kings (VII, 1137). Though Kalhana excludes himself as being one of the credulous lot, yet by and large, his conception of the historical apparently excludes the critical spirit which is associated with the historian in modern times. As has been generally pointed out by western writers, the

Indian mind would not draw a line between mythology and legendary traditions on the one hand and history on the other.

The traditional Indian concept of real history was typically oriental. The medieval Indian historian would suspend his disbelief for the moment, as it were, when taking cognizance of the Puranic myths and other legends of the heroic era, these being almost as real to him as the events of the recent past. History in India was consequently not written as political history, in the western sense, but as a compound of the products of religious imagination and epic fact and fiction. Hardly any attempt was made to separate myth and tradition from historic truth. This explains Kalhana's almost naive credulity—of the miracles and myths of the past—whether he writes about the dubious connection of the first Gonanda kings with the *Mahabharata* war or portrays in picturesque details the legendary exploits of Lalitaditya or Jayapida, whose reigns were comparatively recent to his time.

There is the additional consideration of the historical isolation of the Himalayan Valley of Kashmir. The mighty mountain barriers contributed not only to continual immunity from foreign invasion but also to the preservation of a marked historical individuality. The distinctly local character of Kashmir's history has been faithfully mirrored in Kalhana's Chronicle. Because of the small mountain territory with well-defined boundaries bestowed by nature, it was comparativaly easier for Kalhana to acquire the thorough knowledge of the topography and of men and manners which makes his Chronicle the more valuable—barring the defects arising from narrow limits.

As a chronicler, Kalhana preserved independence of judgement. He did not hesitate to point out the errors and weaknesses of the kings under whom he wrote. His searching scrutiny into the hearts of men and women—their means and ends—shows him up as a modern. In the touching description of King Harsha's tragic end, where sentiment seems to rule supreme, Kalhana yet makes us feel the justice of the fate which overtook "the Nero of Kashmir history." Historical personages like Tunga, Sussala and Ananta are presented in their individual characters and not as mere types. Many a minor actor in the drama of history is presented in a life-like profile. These realistic portrayals present memorably sharp and enduring contrasts to the lifeless

abstractions abounding in the *Kavyas* as well as the historical *Charitas*.

The quality of historic truthfulness which endows these and other characters with verisimilitude also permeates the descriptions of many events in other parts of the *Rajatarangini*. From the standpoint of the modern historian, taken up with 'real history' (or the 'history that matters') the critical reader may well find fault with the disproportionate length devoted to particular incidents by Kalhana in the later parts of the Chronicle. But to Kalhana such longish descriptions were ancillary to what he considered the historical core of the 'River of Kings'. Sometimes it appears that Kalhana was in personal touch with the events, through the narrations of eye-witnesses, when relating pathetic incidents like Kalasa's death, the *Sati* of Queen Suryamati, the assassination of Sussala, etc. Hence the abundance of detail which distinguishes such episodes. In the words of Stein, "If accounts like those of King Harsha's last struggles, his flight and end, Bhikshacara's tragic death, and the fall of Lohara, strike us as true, this is due not only to the mass of the accurate detail with which they are related." The telling directness of the narrative, shorn of the hyperbole and rhetorical ornaments of the typical *Kavyas*, adds to their authenticity. Kalhana emphasises striking examples of Kashmir history by references to similar instances narrated in the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*. At the same time, his love of the Arcadian Vale of Kashmir, abounding in nature's mysterious charms, is revealed in many an inspired passage. What is more, Kalhana presents to us what we want to know: what his contemporary men and women looked like, how they dressed and ate, what were their beliefs and what was their solution to the eternal problem of the relation between the sexes. We are thus able to realise, with a degree of accuracy rarely attainable in the case of any old Indian author, the political and social conditions in which Kalhana lived.

A prominent trait of the Kashmiri, a sense of humour—and a quick eye to spot human weaknesses—was possessed by Kalhana in ample measure. He is at his best in portraits, particularly of the lowly upstarts who climbed the social ladder through craftly wiles; he touches up these sketches with a humour that becomes Rabelaisian at times. With humorous, albeit biting sarcasm, he exposes the inborn cowardice and vain bragging of

the Kashmiri soldiery. He tells us about armies that flee the scene of battle at the sight or even the rumour of a determined, feared enemy. We read of rival forces which tremble in fear of each other. The military "valour" of his compatriots is contrasted with the bravery of the "Rajaputras" and mercenaries from the plains, who in Kalhana's own time, were evidently the mainstay of the kings. There are quite a few strictures on and caricatures of kings and priests, their morals and *modus operandi*.

Kalhana does not hide his contempt for the priestly class whose ignorance was equal to its arrogance, and bitterly complains of their baneful influence on matters of state. In the humorous descriptions, he freely ridicules their combined self-assertion and cowardice and shows scant respect for their sacred stations.

Though Kalhana is an adept at satirical comments, he shows himself at his best as a narrator of historical incidents. He rises to heights of poetic merit, when relating King Harsha's tragic end, or describing King Ananta's funeral and the *Sati* of his queen, Suryamati. The narration attains classic dramatic standards in the portrayal of Harsha's helpessness in the face of overwhelming odds, deserted as he is by his treacherous aides, the denouement reached in the redeeming valour of his final struggle. Likewise, the pathetic episodes in which the dreaded curse of the injured Brahmins culminates in the death of Jayapida, are impressive, the quality of drama heightened by the very simplicity and directness of metaphor and diction.

The wits of King Jayapida (*Taranga* IV) were "obsessed with greed" after his costly wars of conquest all over India and Brahmins *en masse* "sought death in protest" against his wholesale confiscation of temple properties and crop produce. Some telling extracts of the dramatic episode, illustrative of Kalhana's Aeschylean simplicity, follow :

> O the amazing courage of the Brahmins...Those, who remained after others had emigrated abroad, did not cease from seeking death in protest... 632

> "If one less than a hundred of the Brahmins should perish on any one day, a report should be made about it"—thus then exclaimed the king who surpassed in cruelty. 633

. . . Laughing the king said to him (a twice-born named Ittila, the ocean of Brahmin lustre), "Through the wrath of Vishvamitra and others, Harishchandra and the others were ruined; what could possibly happen thou wert enraged ?" 650

Striping the floor with the hand, the infuriate Brahmin replied to him, "When I am engaged why should the punishment of Brahmin not fall on you in an instant ?" 651

Hearing this, with a malicious smirk, the King said to the Brahmin, "Let the punishment of Brahmin fall, why does it delay it even now ?" 652

"Surely there it falls, you miscreant !" No sooner had the Brahmin spoken than on the King's body fell a golden pole which had dropped from the canopy. 653

By this a wound was inflicted on his limb; his body and inflammation, a running sore and a lot of worms which had to be removed with pincers. 654

After experiencing torture, indicative of the torment to come in hell, for many a night, life which yearned to depart, left him. 655

A verse, embodying the moral of the story, follows :

Kings and fishes, which thirst for wealth and turbid water, respectively, in abandoning their own place, follow the wrong path, to that by the vicissitudes, which are dependent upon Fate and by multitude of fishermen, they are suddenly enticed into hell and the firm net, respectively. 658

The celebrated policy dicta, enunciated by Lalitaditya for his minister (*Taranga* IV), couched in ornate verse by Kalhana—when he could not return to Kashmir before completing his conquests—read as follows :

"Action should be taken repeatedly so that the people in the villages should not possess grain for consumption and bullocks for the area of the fields in excess of annual requirements." 347

"For if they were to have excessive wealth, they might become very terrible Damaras in a single year, able to violate the authority of the King." 348

"When once the rural population secures rainment, women, woolen blankets, food, trinkets, horses, dwellings, which are worthy of the capital; when fortifications which ought to be cared for are neglected through arrogance by the kings, and when they show lack of appreciation of the character of their officers; when from a single district is exacted the maintenance for the armed forces; when the civil servants have formed a league by matri monial alliance with one another; when the kings take the same view as the civil servants in the departments of state, then it may be known without doubt that there has been a reversal of the good luck of the subjects." 349-52

To round off the chapter, let us share with Kalhana some of his loaded maxims (as true for their moral today as they were in his time), embellishing the narrative at the stated points :

It is a wonder that kings, after purifying themselves in the cascades of fame, soil themselves by addiction to voices like ele- p hants with dust after a bath. (V, 164)

The crow, whose wits have cast away trustfulness, believes the young ones of others to be its own; the swan, expert in separat- ing milk from water, is nervous about an empty cloud; a king whose wits have become sharp through the supervision of the peopl e considers the words of a knave to be the truth. Beshrew the dispensatin of Fate which is touched by a mixture of clever- ness and folly.
(VI, 275)

To the hero i t seems that the objective should be attained by heroism and so to the timid by caution; otherwise there would be no difference between them.
(VI, 363)

Wood albeit devoid of fire may suffice for the relief of monkey from cold and water and wind for the purification of the coats of antelopes which purify by fire; the realisation of the purpose of a living being who is determined thus depends upon his disposition; in things there is, in reality, no innate principle whatsoever.
(VI, 364)

The snake maintains life by inhaling air, sleeps in a hole of blinding darkness, being naked he looks forward to a veil lent by another during the delight of love to end his embarrassment. Developing this kind of miserliness he guards treasure for the benefit of others; is there any one superior to a miser in doing good to others !
(VII, 502)

> The streams attain great power and nourish the earth from below at its sources; water falls from the sky and the directions pour out water through the mouths of the channels; thus in the season of the clouds a dried up lake is filled up from all sides. On the rise of good fortune riches enter in a hundred ways—what is it which does not become an entrance gate? (VII, 505)

> Providence having set fire to the scanty turf creates an extensive stretch of green sward; having exhibited a day of concentrated heat, it produces a shower of rain. In view of the touch of the surprising variety in its acts no reliance is possible, as if there were a rule of law, in the case of Providence who decrees are uncertain. (VIII, 1970)

> The possession of a noble soul is, forsooth, necessary to be able to exult in the greatness of peace; otherwise attitudes of mind may be indeed gentle or cruel. It may feel hard when touched by the foot yet it is marvellous how the moon-crystal although it is a stone, begins ardently to melt when touched by the feet of the cool-rayed one whose light is ambrosia. (VIII, 3030)

> The harlequin in the dance hall, the epigrammatist in his satirical one act plays, the dog of the cow-pen in the courtyard of his own dwelling, the marmot in his burrow on the hill slopes and the sycophant as a knight of good cheer in the royal house-hold, shows off his valour, elsewhere, however, they resemble a tortoise which has been dragged out of a pond. (VIII, 3139)

All said and done, the study of *Rajatarangini* is not entirely a smooth affair. The eighth book, the largest canto in the Chronicle (comprising 3449 *shlokas*), a veritably heterogeneous record of contemporary events, bristles with obscurities of Kalhana's diction, in the form of involved constructions or poetic ambiguities. What makes matters worse for the present-day historian is that Kalhana's narrative is such as if he was writing for the readers of his day who were well acquainted with the Kashmir of his day. He takes for granted the reader's acquaintance with the personal background of even the lesser personages of his time. He often refers to individuals by official titles only. These faults, howsoever unintended in the writing, have taken away from the value of most authentic and detailed portion of his narrative.

Doubtless, a large portion of the Chronicle, whether narrat-

ing commonplace events or the repetitive episodes of palace intrigues, revolts of pretenders or warrior chiefs and the continual distress of the people, doesn't lend itself to dramatic narration, and inevitably is composed in versified prose. To relieve any ennui on the part of the reader, Kalhana uses poetic similes, striking antitheses and other figures, including puns, but hardly ever does he attempt to secure rhetorical effect. Orations—brief and telling—and interesting dialogues are also introduced to dispel the monotony of the prosaic narrative. Thereby, the reader understands better the motivations of the *dramatis personae* as also the differing reactions of the onlookers. Towards the same end, the narrative is frequently interspersed with verses, embodying maxims, expounding morals or policy dicta, couched in more elaborate metres, which set them apart from the normal *shlokas* of the Chronicle. Keen poetic imagination is evinced by Kalhana even in the delineation of pedestrian, everyday themes, rendered in language that is elegant and graceful. Hence, old and modern anthologies by Indians and foreigners have accorded a high place to Kalhana—a tribute to his inestimable skill as narrator. Many of the popular proverbs, quoted by Kalhana, are still in use in Kashmir.

7

Prehistoric and Early Periods

Kalhana tells us that he began his work in the Saka year 1070, corresponding to the year 4224 of the Laukika era (1148 A.D.) and he finished it in the year 4225 (1150 A.D.) The records in the first three books (*Tarangas*, cantos or books) cover an aggregate period of 3050 years. The narrative for the most part consists of bare dynastic lists of 52 reigns, in the midst of more or less legendary traditions and anecdotes.

Beginning the Chronicle with an incantation to Lord Shiva, Kalhana addresses the reader as "gentle friend" and invites him to "drink free . . .of this River of Kings, delightful with the flow of its sustained sentiment." He then refers to the origin of the Valley which was "Lake of Sati" (*Satisara*) and how the kingdom of Kashmir came into existence, due to the appearance on the scene of Prajapati Kashyapa who had the demon Jalodbhava slain. The territory "under the protection of Nila, supreme lord of all the Nagas", was "the country which may be conquered by the force of spiritual merit but not by armed force", which the "hot-rayed sun honours by bearing himself with softness even in summer." Kalhana lists the characteristics features of the Valley: "Learning,[1] high dwelling house, saffron, icy water,

1. Among others who testified to the fact that Kashmir was from ancient times the seat of Sanskrit learning was Hieun Tsiang, who had visited the Valley five centuries earlier than Kalhana's time. He wrote, inter alia : "The people of Kashmir love learning and are well cultured. Since centuries learning has been held in great reverence in Kashmir."

grapes and the like—what is a commonplace there, is a difficult to secure in paradise."

The legends, and anecdotes, frequent in the beginning of his Chronicle, were taken by Kalhana from the traditional lore current in his own time. "In some instance", comments Stein, "we find Kalhana distinctly specifying popular traditions which differed from the accounts accepted by himself or the authorities he followed."

According to Kalhana, 52 kings ruled over Kashmir in the earliest times. Out of these, only four—Gonanda I, his son Damodara's wife, Yasovati, her son, Gonanda II—are mentioned in the *Nilamatapurana.* Borrowing the traditional lore current in his time, Kalhana connects these rulers with some of the legends of the *Mahabharata.* Kalhana records that Gonanda I was a relation of Jarasandha, the King of Magadha, and that he went to the aid of Jarasandha when the latter was fighting Krishna. Gonanda I died in the battle. His son, Damodara I, who succeeded him, wanted to avenge his father's humiliation. He too died while fighting Krishna in Gandhara The nobles elected his wife. Yashovati, then pregnant, the queen on the advice of Krishna. The son she bore was crowned the king, Gonanda II, in his infancy. The King was quite young when the *Mahabharata*, was fought—this probably explains why there is no reference to Kashmir or its ruler in the epic.

Then Kalhana (I, 83) rather abruptly says that after Gonanda II "thirty-five kings who follow h m have been immersed in the ocean of oblivion, their names and deeds having perished through the destruction of their records."

Legends are still current about the submersion[1] of a city of under the Wular Lake (the largest fresh water lake in India) as well as the folk of Himal and Nagray and Bombur and Lolar which are connected with these last kings.

There is also the belief prevalent among Kashmiris that kings belonging to the Pandava dynasty[2] had once ruled the Valley, and no less than 23 of these lost kings are said to belong to this dynasty. A grandson of Arjuna, namely Haranadev, is

1. Some information provided by a few Muslim chroniclers has been found to lack credibility.
2. The ruins of the famous Martanda temple and some other old temples are popularly called *Pandava-lary*—the buildings of the Pandavas.

said to be the first of these kings who founded the Pandava dynasty after the murder of Gonanda II, engineered by him.

These kings were followed by eight kings. Lava, Kusha, Khagendra, Surendra, Godhara, Suvarna, Janaka and Sachinara. The first four belonged to one dynasty and the rest, to another. Some towns, founded by these rulers, have been traced but nothing definite is known about the historicity of any of them.

The first historical name in the Chronicle is that of Ashoka. According to Kalhana, Ashoka embraced the doctrine of Jina (i.e., Buddha), and besides raising *stupas* and *viharas*, founded a town named Srinagari. He built a Shaiva temple, called Ashokesvara. Kalhana presents Ashoka as a local ruler, but historians are agreed (despite the chronological variance in dates) that the king is the same as Emperor Ashoka of Magadha whose sway extended to Bengal on the east and to Hindukush on the west.

Kalhana says that Ashoka worshipped Shiva Bhutesa at the shrine of Harmukutganga in Kashmir and "obtained from the God whom he had pleased by his austerities, a son." Jalauka, the son, succeeded Ashoka, to become an independent monarch. He is the hero of many traditions recorded by Kalhana. He used to worship daily at Bhutesa and Vijayeshwara shrines. A great warrior, Jalauka cleared the land of Mlecchas,[1] who were probably Indo-Greek raiders trying to conquer territories bordering Kashmir. After a reign of 60 years, Jalauka retired with his queen to Siramochana to spend his last days in meditation.

Damodara II, probobly a descendant of Ashoka, succeeded Jalauka. He founded a city on a plateau, called Damodar Udar; it is the site of the Srinagar aerodrome and is still known by the same name.

North-west India was subjected to foreign invasions after the eclipse of the Mauryan Empire. The Valley of Kashmir could not have escaped these incursions. But there is a gap of about two centuries in the *Rajatarangini* between the death of Damodara II and the advent of Kushan (Turushka) monarchs. With the three Kushan kings, Hushka, Jushka and Kanishka respectively, identified with Huvishka (through epigraphical evidence), Vashishka and Kanishka I or II (more accurately the former)—we touch *via* Kalhana, once again the *terra firma* of authentic history. Each of these rulers, who are supposed to have ruled

1. Cf. P, 17, foot-note.

simultaneously, founded a town, which still bear their names : Hushkapur, Jushkapur and Kanishkapur.

Kalhana's account of the Turushka rulers confirms the Kushan rule of the Valley. (That they established Buddhism in Kashmir has been corroborated by other sources, notably, Hieun Tsiang and Alberuni.) According to Buddhist tradition, Kanishka held the third Buddhist Council in Kashmir. That the Kushans built many *maths* and *chaityas* appears certain though none has survived. The historic Buddhist Council is an important watershed in the history of Buddhism. The Council accorded a superior status to the Mahayanist Doctrine which was conceived and developed in Kashmir.

Nagarjuna,[1] the greatest exponent of Mahayana—rated as the second Patriarch after Asvagosh—lived according to Kalhana (I, 173) at the University of Sharadardwan (modern Harwan, where Buddhist ruins have been excavated), for the major part of his life.

It appears that after the decline of the great Kushans, local rulers like Abhimanyu I, held the day, but they could not, despite their Kushan affiliations, stem the anti-Buddhist tide. The next king, Gonanda III, followed by four others, one and all, promoted Hindu Shaivism, the traditional religion of Kashmir. Five more kings are noted in a row.

The next king of note mentioned by Kalhana is Mihirakula, the son and successor of Vankula. He is no doubt the White Hun ruler who ruled over a large territory of north India after the fall of the Gupta empire. That he occupied the Kashmir Valley is corroborated by Hiuen Tsiang,[2] as well as epigraphical and other evidence. Mihirakula, according, to Kalhana's account, was a cruel, rapacious tyrant, who took a fiendish delight in vandalistic acts against Buddhists and their *stupas* and monasteries. He is said to have inflicted a crushing defeat on the king of Ceylon. Kalhana credits him with building a shrine dedicated to Shiva,[3] near Srinagar, and founding a town, Mihirapur, after his own name. The King, affected by some mental malady, committed suicide.

1. Interest in the philosophy of Nagarjuna—critical as well as subtle—has been revived by recent commentaries by Japanese scholars.
2. *Si-yu-ki* (translated by Beal), I, P. 167.
3. V. Smith in *Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum* confirms Kalhana's descriptions of Mihirakula as a devotee of Shiva, from the king's coins

For a hundred years after the passing away of Mihirakula, the history of Kashmir relapses into oblivion. Among his successors was Gopaditya, who has a greater claim to historical reality than a host of others mentioned in the Chronicle, for he built the temple named Jyeshthesvara on the Gopa hill—now known as Shankaracharya Hill at Srinagar. His grandson, Khinkhila, is the Hun ruler who called himself Deva Sahi Kihingila, on his coins.

The six kings whose reigns comprise the second book of the Chronicle are of different lines of descent. The nobles of Kashmir, who had been instrumental in dethroning—and banishing—Yudhisthira I, invited a relative of king Vikramaditya and crowned him as King of Kashmir as Pratapaditya I. The kingdom torn by internal dissensions, came for some time under the rule of "Harsha and other foreign kings." An inference has been drawn that Kalhana meant the great Harsha Vikramaditya of Ujjain who ruled in the first half of the sixth centuary A.D., but there is probably an error in Kalhana's chronology. About Pratapaditya I, and his son and successor, Jalauka, Kalhana says they ruled justly for 32 years each.

The next ruler was Tunjina, descendant of the banished king Yudishthira. Kalhana gives a graphic account of the terrible famine which took a heavy toll of life during Tunjina's rule. Tunjina's pious wife, Vakpusta, founded the towns of Katimusa (now Kaimuh) and Ramusa (Ramuh). The last king in the second book of the *Rajatarangini* is Aryaraja, whose abdication led to a restoration of Gonanda's family to the rule of Kashmir.

Meghavahana, the first king, was the son of Gopaditya. He had attended the *Swayamvara* of the daughter of the king of Assam and she (Amritaprabha) had chosen him as her husband. A versatile and pious ruler, he launched expeditions of conquest, as far as Ceylon. He founded the town Meghavana and his queen raised a monastery (named Amritbhavan after her) for the accommodation of foreign *Bhikshus*.

Another king of note was the poet Matrigupta,[1] who was a

1. Scholars have made attempts to identify Matrigupta with Kalidasa, the great Sankrit poet and dramatist. The research of Dr. Baudaji (Kalidasa, "although a resident of Ujjain. . . was in all likelihood a native of Kashmir. . . he draws his illustrations chiefly from the natural history and physical geography of northen India, especially the Himalayas. . .") was followed by Dr. L. D. Kalla, who also placed Kalidasa's birth-place in Kashmir.

nominee of King Vikramaditya of Ujjain. The poet-king was a patron of learning. He—says Kalhana—extended his patronage to the great poet, Bhattrimentha (also called Mentha), the author of *Hayagrivavadha*. Practising the Vaishnava faith, he raised a shrine to Vishnu Matruguptasvamin. His position considerably weakened by the death of Vikramaditya, Matrigupta voluntarily abdicated in favour of Pravarsena II.[1] A bold warrior, Pravarasena is said to have undertaken expeditions outside the Valley, conquering the Ganga-Yamuna basin Saurashtra and the land of Trigarta. In the process, he shook off the suzerainty of Ujjain. He founded the city of Pravarapura—on the same location as the present city of Srinagar.

The fourth king after Pravarasena, namely, Ranaditya, is remarkable, for Kalhana quotes the legend that he ruled for 300 years. Mazumdar[2] holds the view that "such an extraordinary regal period of a king indubitably indicates the loss of the true history of the period". Triveda[3] says that this long duration is to be attributed to some Yogic power and adds that "many scholars have supposed the existence of a republic during the intervening period". Ranaditya is said to have married the Chola princess, Ranarambha, daughter of king Ratisena. Kalhana writes eloquently about his Shiva temple and other foundations.

Ranaditya's son, Vikramaditya, ruled for 41 years. Kalhana mentions the foundations of some sacred structures by him. The last king mentioned at the close of the Third Book of the *Rajatarangini* is Durlabhavardhana, a shrewd and clever monarch, who forgave his wife her act of unfaithfulness with Minister Khankha. With his death we come to the end of the Gonanda line of kings.

1. Coins of Pravarasena establish his historicity and disclose an affinity with Kushan and Ephthalite kings. The kings of Kashmir, until the end of the 7th century A.D., came from a branch of the *Kidara Kushans* little Kushans).
2. Majumdar, R. C., *Classical Age*: P. 132.
3. Triveda, D. S.; The Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, 1938; quoted by Dr. K. S. Saxena in *Political History of Kashmir*, 1974.

8

The Karkotas and After

The rise of the Karkotas to power in Kashmir is significant in so far as the dynasty provided a continuity of rule to the Valley for several centuries, at a time when the rest of the sub-continent witnessed the rise and fall of a multiplicity of Rajput kingdoms.

The dynastic name—Karkota—owed its origin to Durlabhavardhana, who was said to have descended from Karkota Naga (III, 529-30), a widely worshipped serpent deity. The descent from the legendary Naga (Karkota) was obviously provided to give a haloed pedigree to Durlabhavardhana whose antecedents otherwise were obscure.

Hieun Tsiang visited the Valley during the reign of Durlabhavardhana (625-661 A.D.) He mentions the contemporary kingdom of Kashmir to comprise Takshasila (east of the Indus), Urasa (Hazara) and Simhapura (the salt range and the smaller hill states of Rajpuri and Poonch) besides the Valley of Kashmir. Durlabhavardhana was a Buddhist like his eminent contemporary, Harshavardhana of Kanauj. Pratapaditya II Durlabhaka (661-711 A.D.), the son of Durlabhavardhana, became king after his father's death. Durlabhaka was succeeded by his eldest son, Chandrapida. He has been identified by some with *T Chen-to-lo-pi-li*, as mentioned in the Chinese Annals, and ruling over Kashmir between 715 and 720 A.D. He was renowned for his piety and justice, the theme illustrated by Kalhana in several stories.

Among the Karkota kings, Mukhtapida Lalitaditya (699-736

A.D.) shines forth as a very powerful monarch whose sway extended far beyond Kashmir and adjacent territories. He was eager for conquests and passed his life mostly in expeditions. His feudatories held Jalamdhara and Lohara, corresponding to the present Kangra and Poonch, and he is said to have attacked the distant states of Kanauj,[1] Bengal, Orissa and the "Kambojas" (eastern Afghanistan). Kalhana is quite clear that Lalitaditya proceeded from the Orissan coast westward and crossed the Vindhyas with the help and assistance offered by the Ratta queen. The itinerary of Lalitaditya's march has been traced in the geographical order. But the most important of his expeditions was against Yashovarman; by that victory Lalitaditya not only made himself master of Kanauj but also acquired the right of suzerainty over a vast area. He seems to have conquered Malwa and Gujarat and defeated the Arabs of Sindh.

Kashmiris credit their king with having been victorious over the Turks.[2] Lalitaditya is said to have brought from the country of the Tukharas, Cankuna, whom he made his minister. Kalhana attributes to Cankuna the foundation of two *viharas*[3] and a *stupa*. These extensive conquests[4] made the kingdom of Kashmir, in Lalitaditya's time, the most powerful empire that India had known since the time of the Guptas. The ruins of the temple at Martanda, which the king had raised, still form the most impressive ancient monument in Kashmir. "Some of the *stupas*, *viharas* and *chaityas* built in his reign have been unearthed and justify by their remains the high fame which the monarch had enjoyed as a builder".[5] In Parihaspura, the town founded by Lalitaditya, Buddhist *viharas* stood side by side with Hindu temples; the remains of both still bear out the religious tolerance

1. The coins of Lalitaditya have been discovered at Kanauj, Banda, Faizabad, Varanasi (Rajghat and Sarnath), Nalanda and Monghyr. These clearly indicate the path that Lalitaditya followed, most probably during his victorious march towards the east.
2. In Alberuni's account, the local tredition speaks of Kashmiri king Muttai's (i.e. Mukhtapida's) triumph over the Turks.
3. One of these was visited by the Chinese pilgrim, Ou-Kong. In Kalhana's time, the Cankuna *vihara* was repaired by Sussala, the pious wife of a minister.
4. Lalitaditya's later conquest of the Bhauttas or Tibetans has been verified through Chinese (Tang) annals.
5. Ray, S. C., *Early History and Culture of Kashmir*; P. 49.

of Lalitaditya. The worthy monarch, who became immortal in the annals of India as a warrior and an able ruler, died in one of his expeditions. He had already given instructions to his ministers as to how to deal with such a contingency, in the light of the Hindu theory of seven limbs of the state (*saptanga*), as enunciated by Manu and other law-givers.

Lalitaditya was not only a great soldier and military genius but also an able administrator and patron of art and letters. According to Kalhana, he extended his patronage to Bhavabhuti and Vakpatiraja, the court-poets of Yashovarman, whom he had defeated. Kashmir became the synagogue of foreign scholars; many cultural missions from other countries were received with respect. Lalitaditya founded the Kashmir school of art which also incorporated Greek, Gandhara and indigenous Gupta traits.

Kashmiris celebrated Lalitaditya's victories for centuries and, with pardonable exaggeration, called him the universal monarch. He had his faults, none the less, which Kalhana does not hide. That Lalitaditya was fond of wine and women is evident from the Chronicle. After a reign of thirty-six years, Lalitaditya died about 736 A.D. His successors were weak and inactive; they could not maintain the power and prestige of the Karkota dynasty.

Jayapida (751-782 A.D.), fifth descendent and grandson of Lalitaditya, however, made a serious attempt to regain the lost supremacy of Kashmir. His conquering expeditions at the head of a sizable army of 80,000, to Prayaga (Allahabad), Kanauj and even up to Nepal, are described in detail by Kalhana. His romantic adventures took him to Bengal also, where he married the daughter of a prince, Jayanta. Jayapida[1] too set out, like Lalitaditya, for the "conquest of the earth." He too built a city, named Jayapura, flanking the Wular Lake—now known as Andarkot—and surrounded himself by men of letters, among whom Damodaragupta, Manoratha, and Sankhadanta stand out. Among his ministers was Vamana, one of the co-authors of the

1. A number of mixed metal coins of the Karkota dynasty, stuck in Jayapida's alias, Vinaditya, have been found, but there is little contemporary evidence of his having achieved the vast conquests as detailed by the poet-historian.

Kashikavartti, the well-known commentary on Panini's grammar. Folklore, however, surrounds his exploits, like those of his grand-parent.

Towards the close of his reign, when his overweeningly ambitious expeditions had depleted the treasury, Jayapida became avaricious and exacted high taxes from his subjects. The story of the Naga deity of the Wular Lake directing him to a copper mine nearby reveals the King's desire to replenish his resources. The salary of the army was in arrears and the administration was floundering. With the assistance of his financial adviser, Sivadasa, the King appropriated to himself—for three successive years—the whole of the agricultural produce, including the cultivators' share. The Brahmins became his special victims and emigrated in large numbers. To change the King's heart and his ways, Brahmins also sought death by starvation (*Prayopavesa*)—one of the earliest instances of non-violent methods of political struggle in India. Kalhana powerfully dramatises the scene in which the wrath of the exasperated Brahmins brought about an accident, culminating in the death of the unyielding monarch. A few verses depicting this were given in the chapter on "Kalhana as Narrator" (Pp. 46-47).

Jayapida's son, Lalitapida, was addicted to wine and women and neglected his royal duties. In the words of Kalhana, the kingdom was "divided by immorality." Lalitapida was succeeded by his brother, Sangramapida II, who ruled for seven inconsequential years, and after whom usurpers came upon the scene. Battles followed and puppets of the contending parties were enthroned.

The zenith of glory of the Karkotas coincided with the lustrous rule of Lalitaditya, when Kashmir rose from a petty principality to a sizable empire. However, the Karkota reign as a whole must be considered one of the most glorious periods in the history of Kashmir. Despite the rather extravagant claims of conquest of the early Karkotas by Kalhana, their incorporation of adjoining regions and acquisition of a considerable part of north Indian territory has not been disputed. But the administration of the brilliant dynasty had become effete and chaotic by the time Anangapida, the son of Sangramapida II, occupied the throne. As a result of intrigues, he was displaced by Utpalapida. The Karkota glory was on the wane—

the monarchs of Kashmir having already receded into the background of Indian history.

A witty minister, Sura, replaced Utpalapida by Avantivarman, grandson of Utpalaka, as the king. The accession of Avantivarman (855/6-883 A.D.), ushers that phase of Kashmir history of which the Chronicler gives a truly historical record. The memory of Avantivarman is still left green by the ruins of two temples (Avantisvara and Avantisvami) at Avantipur—the town founded by the king—which "though not equal in size to Lalitaditya's structures, yet rank among the most imposing monuments of ancient Kashmir architecture." His minister, Sura, wielded great power because of his part in having made Avantivarman the king. Sura vied with the King in acts of piety and laying great foundations. He honoured learned men by giving each a seat in the court of the King. The men of letters patronised by the King included the celebrated Muktakana, poets Sivasvamin and Ratnakara, and the versatile philosopher, Bhatta Kallata.

The Damaras, led by Dhanva, who had usurped temple properties, were suppressed by Sura with an iron hand. Other than this disturbing episode, the reign of Avantivarman was by and large peaceful, and economic recovery was accorded high priority by the King. He wanted to eliminate floods and famines that frequently visited the Valley, and entrusted this task to his other able minister, Suyya, who was a celebrated engineer. Great river operations were carried out by Suyya. For the drainage of the Valley and irrigation of large tracts of land, the course of the Vitasta (Jhelum) was changed below Baramulla. Immense benefits accrued to the people as the country was saved from disastrous floods. Suyya supplemented these measures by an equally important step of improving the irrigation system, which was a boon for the cultivation of rice, the staple food of Kashmiri. Suyya is remembered by the town, founded on the bank of the Jhelum, Suyyapore—now called Sopore.

The manner of Avantivarman's death at the mountain of Tripuresvara (modern Triphar) was characteristic of his life. A Vaishnava at heart, he would worship Shiva out of regard for his minister. This secret he revealed to Sura on his (the King's)

deathbed. According to Kalhana (V, 125),[1] "At the end listening to the Bhagavad Gita and meditating on the light of Vishnu he, perceiving the Supreme Soul, was released from life."

Though Avantivarman's reign lacked the glamour of territoritorial conquests, he proved an able ruler and administrator, and the real founder of the glory of the Utpala house.

With Avantivarman's son and successor, Shankaravarman (883-902 A.D.), begins the line of Kings whose reigns are evidenced by an unbroken series of coins which have considerably augmented the value of the Chronicle as a historical work. Shankaravarman, seeking to emulate the exploits of Pravarasena, Lalitaditya and Jayapida, marched at the head of a large army (the number, nine lakhs, given by Kalhana appears exaggerated) whose number swelled as the feudatories joined up with their forces. He recovered the southern hill tracts of Kashmir which had been lost during the last days of the Karkota dynasty. His greatest victory was against Alakhama, the ruler of Gurjara (between the Jhelum and the Chenab) in the Punjab, extending his domain in that direction.

During an expedition towards the Indus, where Shankaravarman received tributes from numerous kings, he was fatally wounded, while marching back through Urasa—the present Hazara district. Though Shankaravarman's successes were confined only to the borderlands of Kashmir, he had depleted the royal treasury to the point of exhaustion. Hence, Shankaravarman oppressed the people by "skilfully designed exactions." Shankaravarman is remembered for having introduced *Begar*[2] (forced labour used chiefly for transport purpose) on an organised basis. Kalhana bitterly expatiates on the unhappy results of this regime which favoured only the rapacious tribe of officials (Kayasthas) and "left men of learning unprovided with emoluments."

Struggles of succession, with consequent sufferings of the people, followed Shankaravarman's rule. Gopalavarman (902-904 A.D.), his son, still a child, ascended the throne, under the

1. This has been interpreted as the first instance in recorded history of the *Gita* being used as a book of religious recitation.
2. *Begar* persisted as a characterstic feature of Kashmiri administration until the beginning of this century.

regency of his mother, Sugandha. The infant king became victim of a minister's black magic and was succeeded by Sugandha herself in 904 A.D. Detested for her low morals, Sugandha was removed after a short rule of two years by Tantrins. She is remembered by the town Sugandhapura, founded by her.

The Tantrins, a military caste of uncertain origin, had practically become the Praetorian Guard of Kashmir during the first quarter of the tenth century. In 917/18 A.D., a grim famine, consequent to the destruction of the autumn rice crop by floods, overtook the Valley, the wrath of nature complementing the oppression of man to fill the people's cup of misery to the brim. The Tantrins—along with Ekangas, another body of militant soldiery—made and unmade kings at their pleasure. The court was corrupt and dissolute. The Tantrins were defeated by Chakravarman who regained the kingdom for the third time. He married a low-caste Domba girl, Hamsi, and proclaimed her the chief queen. His court matched him in licentious practices. He was assassinated (937 A.D.) in the chamber of Hamsi by some disgruntled Damaras, who had originally helped Chakravarman in recovering his throne.

The next king, Unmattavanti, or 'mad Avanti,' was no less depraved and despotic. He starved his half-brother to death and had his father, Partha, murdered. The old man was carried away from his weeping wife, dragged along the streets by the hair, and in Kalhana's words (V, 432-34), "they killed him, who was unarmed and weak from starvation, weeping and nude." King Avanti laughed to see an officer strike the dead body of Partha. Unmattavanti died of consumption in 939 A.D., after a brief turbulent rule of two years.

Consequent to a revolt by the commander-in-chief, Kamalavardhana, against a pretender, an assembly of Brahmins elected a learned but poor Kashmiri, Yasaskara, to the throne. Yasaskara's benevolent rule (939-948 A.D.) was a boon to the Kashmiris after years of troubles. He granted 55 villages on the Jhelum as *agraharas* to learned Brahmins and also constructed a *matha*[1] for the students of 'Aryadesha' (northern India) at

1. The *matha* evinces the cultural contacts between Kashmir and plains of of India continuing in the tenth century.

Parihaspura, his ancestral abode. On Yasaskara's death his child-son became king in 948 A.D., but he was killed by the minister Parvagupta who usurped the throne (949 A.D.). Parvagupta died in 950 A.D. and was succeeded by his son, Kshemagupta. Once again Kashmir had a rapacious and licentious monarch. He married Didda, the daughter of Simharaja, the chief of Lohara and grand-daughter, from the mother's side, of the illustrious Shahi King, Bhimapala—and thereby changed the course of history of Kashmir. Kshemagupta's union with Didda brought Kashmir under the rule of the Lohara family, which continued to hold Kashmir as well as its own original home state down to Kalhana's time and after. The King was so enamoured of his wife that people nicknamed him 'Diddakshema'.[1]

Didda ruled, first as regent-queen and then as the Queen, after Kshemagupta's death. Driven by the lust of power, she ruled Kashmir sternly for twenty-three years. Though cruel, unscrupulous and dissolute, she possessed statesmanlike sagacity and administrative ability, p resumably combining charm with brains. Brahmins staged *Prayopavesa* (fasts) to oust Tunga, Didda's paramour-minister—by no means her first lover-minister —but her cunning diplomacy and bribes and Tunga's courage carried the day. Tunga defeated Prithvipala, the king of Rajapuri, for defying the authority of Kashmir and forced him to pay tribute. Tunga "annihilated the pest of the Damaras" when they staged an uprising, during the last years of Didda's reign.

Before Didda died in 1003 A.D., she passed on the kingdom to Sangramaraja, son of her brother, Udayaraja, the ruler of Lohara. Thus the rule over Kashmir changed hands peacefully to a new dynasty.

During the reign of Samgramaraja, the new Lohara king, Prime Minister Tunga led an expedition to help the Shahi king, Trilochanapala—son of Anandapala—against Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. Tunga obtained some minor successes, but was ultimately defeated. The King was unhappy over his dependence on Tunga and had him assassinated. He himself did not live long after a minor uprising of the Damaras and the Darads, and died in 1025 A.D., after a rule of 26 years.

1. Numismatic evidence, showing the coins of Kshemagupta, with the letter 'Di' on some of them, corrorate this.

Ananta, the younger son of Samgramaraja, ascended the throne in 1028 A.D., after a 22-day rule of his elder brother, Hariraja, who was murdered at the instance of Srilekha, the ambitious and libidinous queen-mother. He not only quelled a revolt by feudal chiefs but also successfully repelled an invasion by the Darads and Muhammadans. His pious queen, Suryamati, took a leading part in the affairs of state. Her administration proved strong and efficient. Dominated by his wife, Ananta spent much of his time in meditation. Suryamati persuaded the king to abdicate the throne in favour of her son, Kalasa (1063 A.D.). Prosperity at home permitted Kalasa to send expeditions to neighbouring regions—Rajapuri and Urusa were subjugated. Though he extended and consolidated the kingdom of Kashmir, his last year were embittered by suspicion between himself and his son, Harsha. He died, in 1089 A.D., after he, wanting to instal his younger son, Utkarsa, as ruler of Kashmir, had Harsha imprisoned.

Harsha managed to escape from the prison, and seized the throne, which was his by right. The rule of King Harsha (1089-1101 A.D.) is elaborately treated by Kalhana, A youth of exceptional prowess, Harsha was skilled in many sciences. He was a linguist and poet in several languages. Harsha introduced new fashions in his court and encouraged learning by attending meetings of scholars and poets in his assembly hall, which was illuminated by a thousand lamps. His court attracted hosts of musicians, poets, and scholars from far and near. Kalhana refers to the introduction of Karnataka[1] tunes and musical instruments into Kashmir. Impressed by Harsha's munificence towards men of learning and poets, Bilhana, the celebrated court-poet of the Chalukya king, Parmadi, is said to have regretted that he had left Kashmir during the disturbed rule of Kalasa.

Harsha, a shrewd and capable administrator as well as a broad-minded patron of learning, commenced his rule on the right foot. Instilling a sense of discipline among his officers, he set a personal example of attending to royal duties and following a rigid time-table in his patronage to Brahmins and

1. A number of extant coins of Harsha with the elephant motifs bear out the intimation of the contemporary coinage of Karnataka.

his chief queen, Vasantalekha, contributed generously to charitable endowments.

While extolling the many virtues of Harsha, Kalhana takes due stock of his failings and weaknesses. A mixture of strange contrasts, Harsha was thus pithily described by Kalhana: "Cruelty and kind-heartedness, liberality and greed, violent self-willedness and reckless supineness, cunning and want of thought —these and other apparently irreconcilable features, in turn display themselves in Harsha's chequered life."

The able commander-in-chief, Kandarpa, was sent by Harsha to quell the chief of Rajauri. Kandarpa subjugated the chief, Samgramapala, and exacted the tribute. Evil-minded councillors, torn by jealousy, secured the banishment of Kandarpa. Treachery loomed large in the palace and in the kingdom. Pretenders, nearest to the throne, engaged in conspiracies against Harsha, who had them put out of the way. The military activities, involving extravagant expenditure on the troops, plus Harsha's own indulgence on expensive pleasures (the harem had increased to hold 360 ladies from all castes, except the Dombas and the Chandalas), involved him in financial straits. New and oppressive taxes were imposed. Kalhana makes the satiric observation: "Even nightsoil became the object of special taxation." Harsha dug his hands deep into the hoarded treasures of temples. Harsha's erstwhile liberality changed to greed and avarice and he had the gold and silver images of gods in temples melted throughout the Valley. These iconoclastic "excesses and his acts of incest with his father's widow indicated the unmistakable indication of an unsound mind." Fresh calamities befell the unhappy, discontended people in 1099 A.D. in the form of plague and disastrous floods. To divert their attention, Harsha attacked Damaras, the powerful feudal landlords—Kalhana gives revolting descriptions of cruelties inflicted upon them.

Nemesis arrived on the scene in the form of two brothers, Uccala and Sussala, descended from a side branch of the Lohara family. The Damaras and other rebel forces joined hands with them to oust the mad king. Harsha was slain after a desperate resistance. His head was carried before Uccala who had it burned, while his body, naked like a beggar's, was cremated by a compassionate wood-cutter. (A few uerses depicting this were given in the chapter on Kalhana as a poet.—P. 30).

The death of Harsha is the last episode in the seventh book of the *Rajatarangini*. (The rest of the events: up to Kalhana's own time, have been dealt with, in a previous chapter "Kalhana and His Time.")

About half of the Chronicle, the eighth and last book, is devoted by Kalhana to the half of the twelfth century which lies between the downfall of Harsha and the date of the composition of the Chronicle. This lengthy treatment, though confused at times, has the advantage that an authentic contemporary picture of the social, political and economic aspects of Kashmir is presented.

Rebel Damaras distrubed the peace of the country. Pretenders rose and fell. The people of Srinagar suffered a desperate siege. Jayasimha, the son of Sussala, ruled over Kashmir with "cunning diplomacy and unscrupulous intrigue." The concluding stanzas of the Chronicle are devoted to the praise of Jayasimha's queen, Radda Devi, and their children. That takes us to the twenty-second year of Jayasimha's reign, 1149-50 A.D. Kalhana concludes the poem with a verse comparing his Chronicle, the "River of Kings", with the swift current of the Godavari, a river of South India.

9

Lessons from the Rajatarangini

A point that can bear reiteration is that Kalhana's Chronicle is not without interest from the point of view of Indian history as a whole. The major part of Indian history is made up from history of the states. As only meagre details of any other provincial history are extant, Kalhana's history, being an exhaustive account of one of the states, serves as a type applicable to the remaining states.

According to Kalhana, history was not something to learn but something to make people understand life, for it deals with the manifold, intricate aspects of human relations. Kingship in the early stages of Vedic period was elective. Later, it became hereditary; the present and future of kingdoms came to depend largely upon the personality of the monarch. There was almost no *body politic* that would mould the shape of the state. The deeds of despotic kings were patiently watched by the populace. Rebellions arose from the class interests of feudal barons; these uprisings were popular revolts. The living conditions of the people under Lalitaditya and strong monarchs like him could hardly be distinguished from those of serfdom. While the rich consumed meat viands and wine cooled and perfumed with flowers, the people were lucky if they could get two meals of rice and vegetable a day. Several such lessons of note are brought out by Kalhana's Chronicle "which contains endless transactions of ancient times."

Historical events are shown to illustrate political maxims and precepts of diplomacy. The passages in which Kalhana gives in

brief the principles of government adapted to Kashmir are particularly interesting. This is presented as king "Lalitaditya's Code of Kashmiri Statecraft." The Machiavellian tinge of the precepts can be likened to that of *Niti-Sastra* works of India. In Kalhana's maxims there is, however, distinctly local flavour which makes them valuable from a historical point of view.

The very first maxim is peculiarly Kashmiri. As Kashmir had no foreign enemies, because of its narrow geographical boundries, the rulers are admonished to adopt positive measures in order to prevent internal dissensions. The inhabitants of the mountain tracts enclosing the Valley "should be punished even if they give no offence." Kalhana was thinking of the Khasas and other mountain clans who were given to plundering the Kashmiris during weak reigns. Likewise, he advised the sovereign not to leave more than one year's food supply with the villagers, to curb the power of the landed aristocracy represented by the Damaras. The recurring rebellions of these feudal landholders had caused civil strife in Kalhana's time and earlier. He shows positive aversion to them and repeatedly calls them *dasyu* (robbers). The political inconsistency of the people—who, great and small, would readily turn their coats with the changing reigns—is mentioned several times by Kalhana. There are graphic descriptions of idle, unaffected city crowds, who were callously indifferent to dynastic changes. Kalhana's pithy observations about his countrymen are such as only a man with a keen, observant and critical faculty could make. There is much to learn from these comments, interspersed in the Chronicle.

Kalhana could appreciate historical events to draw lessons from them for posterity. When Jayasimha led an expedition into the upper Kishanganga valley, Kalhana observes that failure is inevitable when plans are made without sufficient knowledge of the enemy's strength. He also criticises the errors of policy committed by the rebel opponents of Jayasimha, and shows how much the King's success was due to their mistakes.

Another striking lesson of the history of Kashmir is the malicious influence of the court intrigues and harem jealousies upon the sovereign as well as the people at large. It looks as though Kalhana intelligently watched the court and recorded what he saw, in the hope that posterity would benefit from his

observations. In the words of R.C. Majumdar.[1] "The incredible sensuality of the kings and queens of Kashmir, which brought untold sufferings upon the state, throws a lurid light on the manners and customs of the age, and gives a rude shock to the fond illusion of benevolent despotism of our ancient rulers."

The same writer also observes : "There is hardly any consiousness of India as motherland, characterizing the actions of any of the Kashmir Kings." This view is somewhat controversial. The isolated geographical position of Kashmir has given the appearance of insularity to the administration and manners of the people of Kashmir. There is so much in Kalhana's Chronicle to prove that Kashmiris participated in the mainstream of the life in the country. To give an instance, Kalhana's history helps the research scholar to trace the growth of *Sati* which prevailed in Kashmir as in the rest of India for a long time. The custom grew out of a practice of the Scytho-Tartars. The vassals of a Scytho-Tartar nobleman would commit suicide upon his death. During the age of chivalry the custom survived in Kashmir, as in other parts of India, and was not confined to the royal family alone. "The custom of *Sati* was so deeprooted in the valley, that even mothers and sisters and other near relatives burnt themselves along with their beloved deceased," says S. C. Ray[2] on the authority of Kalhana.

The gloomy picture typifying Indian states as a whole was offset by happy colours; despite the primi ive political development, the people as well as their sovereigns, good, bad and indifferent, cultivated the fine arts like music and the dance. Art and architecture in the best modes flourised. Religion, philosophy and science even evinced remarkable progress in many of their branches. But Kalhana's observations seem to suggest that the achievements of the great were simply answers to certain vital needs in society; success in different fields crowned the efforts of men because the time was ripe.

The careers of queens like Vakpushta, Didda, Sugamala and Suryamati as well as many minor ones, showed the equal opportunity afforded to women in public life. Kalhana (and other

1. *Ancient India*. p. 386.
2. *Early History and Culture of Kashmir*, 1969; p. 116.

historians) have alluded in so many words to the scholarship and erudition of women in ancient India. Seclusion or veiling of women was unkown, for women had emerged from the domestic arena on the political stage. "In Kalhana's book"—according to Jawaharlal Nehru in his foreword to R.S. Pandit's translation of the *Rajatarangini*—"women seem to play quite an important part, not only behind the scenes but in the councils and the field as leaders and soldiers." The queens had their own treasures and were actively associated with the administration. Neither sex nor caste (nor birth) was a bar to the holding of any civil or military post. Even 'dancing women' took aggressive part in politics. "Kashmir is a land which delights in insurrections. . ." wrote Kalhana. "In this country dancing women of the temples of the gods take a pleasure in upheavals against theking."

The growing importance of land is underlined in the post-Karkota period. The *Rajatarangini*, however, is silent as to the exact living conditions of the cultivating class; these can only be deduced from the revenue exactions made by the Damaras, the landed aristocracy. For the Damaras and the Tantrins, a warrior class, who also became kingmakers in disturbed times, Kalhana hardly conceals his contempt.

Untouchability was unknown in Kashmir—perhaps it had almost ceased to exist during the dominance of Buddhism. King Chakravarman married an 'untouchable' Domba woman. But Dombas were not exactly untouchable, as known in other parts of India. Kalhana records that Dombas were good musicians. Another low caste mentioned is that of Chandalas; some served as royal bodyguards. The Chronicle also reveals that some of the bravest generals were Brahmins—a healthy state of affairs revived later by the Marathas. The point to note is that the intermediate castes between Brahmins and the lower castes, as prevalent in other parts of India, were unknown in Kashmir.

The *Rajatarangini* is more than an account of the reigns of the kings of Kashmir. Kalhana presents an authentic picture of his contemporary social and political life. The Chronicle is a vast mine of information about the past of Kashmir and the contiguous territories. It also contributes to the understanding of the chequered course of his history of Kashmir after Kalhana's day. The period between the time of Kalhana and the Mughal annexation of Kashmir (1588 A.D.) evinces a continuity in the histori-

cal conditions and trends that prevail in the latter portion of the *Rajatarangini*.

Didactic and descriptive verses of the *Rajatarangini* form a characteristic feature in Kalhana's poetic style. Whatever claim Kalhana can make for himself, despite the not very certain verisimilitude of his sources, he voices in modest terms in these stanzas :

> Although I narrate again the subject-matter of chroniclers which others have written, the vartuous ought not to turn their faces from me without hearing my reasons.
>
> What genius can be exhibited when men of modern times compile in their own books accounts given by those who died after composing each the history of those kings whose contemprary he was? Hence in this narrative of past facts—a subject which is neglected in every respect—my endeavour is simply to compile.

The didactic lesson of his work is : "All mundane glory is transitory; retribution inevitably follows departures from moral laws." Four out of the eight books into which his work is divided conclude with observations of this kind. One of his profound thoughts in the last canto of the Chronicle is : "Shadow is itself unrestrained in its path while sunshine, as an incident of its own nature, is pursued a hundredfold by nuance. Thus is sorrow from happiness a thing apart; the scope of happiness, however, is hampered by the aches and hurts of endless sorrow."

Kalhana is not a fatalist; he does not, like Thomas Hardy, believe in "the impishness of circumstance." His is a firm belief after Buddhism, in Karma, and it is in the forefront throughout the Chronicle. This is a remarkable trait, for in his time Buddhism had been supplemented by Shaivism in Kashmir. "Kalhana knew that everything withered with age and decayed in time; only the artist could seize the passing form and stamp it in a mould that resist mortality."

Kalhana wishes the reader to be patient with him. He makes it clear that he is not a sycophant of any contemporary potentate. Whatever he is compiling and composing can be depended on for its comparative objectivity and hence the reader can profit from the lessons he draws from the march of history.

The scanty historical records of the later Sanskrit chronicles are better interpreted, thanks to the generally accurate information of Kalhana's Chronicle. Thus has Kalhana, the great poet-historian, not only saved the history and ancient culture of Kashmir from oblivion, but also helped the student of history to synthesize the disjointed accounts of chroniclers. And, lastly, the student of the history of Kashmir can intelligently converse with the past in a more satisfactory manner—and learn from those times, in moral and materialistic terms—than is possible in the case of any other state of India.

10

Other Chroniclers

Kalhana's Chronicle is a treasure house of information about the past of Kashmir and the contiguous territories. It also contributes to the understanding of the chequered course of the history of Kashmir after Kalhana's day. Kalhana, the poet-historian, set a pattern which was followed by later historians, most of whom were poets and scholars like him.

Pandit Jonaraja brought Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* down to his own day. An honoured historian, believed to have been born in 1383 A.D., Jonaraja (his original name was Jyotsnakara) continued the Chronicle in Sanskrit verse until 1459 A.D. He came to the notice of the liberal Muslim monarch, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-1470 A.D.) by dint of his scholarship. The Sultan asked him to bring Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* down to his time. The new work was called *Dvitiya-Rajatarangini* (Second *Rajatarangini*).

The greater portion of Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini* dealt with the reigns of the later Hindu rulers, (that is, after Kalhana's time) from Jayasimha to Queen Kota. It appears that Jonaraja's scholarship—he wrote three learned commentaries—weighed heavily on his skill and attainments as a historian. As pointed out by Sri Kanth Kaul, "The chief defect that impairs the historical narrative is the obscurity of diction. The phraseology of the chronicler does not sometimes communicate the precise information required for drawing the accurate historical conclusions." Kaul's critique of the style of the poet-historian ends on a devasting note: "Jonaraja's compressed expressions become

puzzling." Written at the behest of a ruling monarch, the history in parts reads like a court chronicle. Presumably because of the sources providing scanty information, the reigns of the earlier kings are summarily dealt with—important events are sometimes disposed of in single stanzas and others ignored altogether. Nevertheless, the Jonaraja *Rajatarangini*[1] retains its importance in spite of these blemishes. It is the earliest extant source of information from 1150 A.D. to 1459 A.D., the year of Jonaraja's death. The chronology, wherever given, is correct; the topography is reliable, on the whole. By and large, it is a fairly objective historical chronicle, presented in the typical poetical form, like Kalhana's Chronicle.

Jonaraja's pupil, Shrivara, who was also a confidant of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, continued the chronicle in what came to be called as *Jaina-Rajatarangini*, covering in four chapters events from 1459 A.D. to 1486 A.D. Besides being a scholar-poet like Jonaraja, he was a musician. Rather than following the style of his master, Shrivara took to an outright imitation of Kalhana, so much so that his extension of Jonaraja's chronicle reads like the original *Rajatarangini*. His four cantos are significant for providing valuable details of the contemporary life. We reap a good advantage from his history in so far as it indicates the alterations that were taking place in the names of important localities. For instance, the *tirtha* of Martand, the spring temple, not far from the celebrated temple of Lalitaditya, was already referred to by the name of Bhavan, by which it is still current. Devoted to his job, Shrivara survived the change of monarchs from Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin to his successor, Sultan Hasan Shah (1472-84 A.D.)

1. Dr. G.M.D. Sufi has pointed out in *Kashir* that the Sanskrit text of Jonaraja, used by J. C. Dutt (the Calcutta edition of 1835) contained 980 *shlokas* while Dr. Peterson's Sanskrit text of Jonaraja (the Bombay edition of 1896), had 1334 *Shlokas*. Dr. Sufi added : "Moreover the actual work of Prajyabhatta entitled, *Rajnvalipataka*, has not yet been taken notice of and Shuka's *Rajatarangini* has been mistaken for the joint work of Prajyabhatta and Shuka by Mr. Dutt, Dr. Peter Peterson and Sir Aurel Stein, obviously on account of the confusion caused by the accession of Sultan Fateh Shah thrice to the throne of Kashmir. When Shrivara closed his chronicle, Fateh Shah was ruling for the first time. When Shuka began his chronicle, Fateh Shah was again Sultan. As the same ruler was reigning for the second time, the link to these three scholars appeared to be continuous."

As a matter of fact, the latter appointed him as the head of the department of music which was customarily patronised by the Sultan. The next Sultan, Muhammad Shah (1484-86 A.D.) also extended royal patronage to Shrivara.

Though the period covered (1459-86 A.D.) is less than 30 years, Shrivara's treatment is quite exhaustive, and the general level of the narrative is agreed to be superior to the Jonaraja Chronicle. Stein,[1] however, characterised Shrivara as "a slavish imitator of Kalhana" and added, "His text looks, in great portion, more like a canto from the *Rajatarangini* than an original composition. Like Jonaraja, his narration is also a court chronicler's. . ." Stein, however, gives Shrivara's chronicle its due: "Still, it is important because it is the only contemporary source for the period of thirty years that it covers."

The chronicle of Shrivara was continued by Pandit Prajyabhatta, under the title *Rajavalipataka*. It set down the history of about 27 years from 1486 to 1513-14 A.D., when Sultan Fateh Shah and Sultan Muhammad Shah deposed and succeeded each other twice. The accounts of these reigns have caused some confusion, though Shrivara's pupil, Shuka,[2] completed *Rajavalipataka* after the annexation of the Valley by Emperor Akbar in 1586 A.D., naming his chronicle, *Rajatarangini* after the celebrated title of Kalhana. The evolution of nomenclatures of towns and other places from the old to the modern (some close to the present-day place-names) is more prominent in the chronicles of Prajyabhatta and Shuka. R.K. Parmu[3] is of the opinion that Prajyabhatta's "original work has undoubtedly been lost and what we get is a summary of this in 50 verses by his successor, Shuka." Shuka's account suffers from the defects of being haphazard and often unchronological, nor is his topography always correct.

There is still another work that continues the tradition of *Rajatarangini*. Entitled *Lokaprakasha*, it is believed to have been commenced by Kshemendra in the 11th century. Reference to Shah Jahan in the second chapter suggests that it could have

1. Stein, M.A. : *Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir*, English translation of the *Rajatarangini*.
2. See *Kings of Kashmir-III*—English translation of the *Rajataranginis* of Jonaraja, Shrivara and Shuka by J.C. Dutta, Calcutta, 1898.
3, *History of Muslim Rule in Kashmir; 1320-1819*, New Delhi, 1969.

been written in the 17th century. This is corroborated by the diction of the work, an admixture of Sanskrit and Persian, and a sprinkling of Kashmiri. The chronicle stands out, nevertheless, for one remarkable trait : there is less of political-dynastic treatment and more of information pertaining to administrative, social, and economic subjects.

These later chronicles are definitely inferior as literary compositions when compared to Kalhana's *Rajatarangini.* The overall assessment is that, despite their individual lapses, they improved considerably Kalhana's method of writing history. Theirs is the fairly authentic record of the transitional period when the rule of Kashmir changed hands from the Hindus to Muslims. Thus, "they throw light on the contemporary life of Kashmiris and record the troubles and oppressions which lasted with short interruptions for two and a half centuries previous to Akbar's conquest."[1] Their accounts of contemporary events are on the whole correct, though their views not unoften colour the narratives. As Jogesh Chunder Dutt puts it, "It must be mentioned that valuable as the writings of these authors are from a historical point of view, in the absence of any other history of the country they relate to, we cannot unhesitatingly accept their estimation of persons and events when we remember that they were, what may be called, court pandits, and depended on the smiles of kings, whose accounts they wrote, for almost everything they had in the world."[2]

Sanskrit continued to be the language for transacting official business for about two centuries after the advent of Muslim rule. The vogue of chronicling events in Sanskrit ceased gradually, with the increasing patronage bestowed on the Persian language (and literature) by the Muslim monarchs. Kashmiri scholars adapted themselves to the change with great flexibility and took to writing history in Persian.

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, who had the *Rajatarangini* continued in its original Sanskrit verse-form, also had it translated into Persian by Mulla Ahmad. The choice of the translator was befitting: Mulla Ahmad was an eminent scholar, and a distinguished poet and historian in his own right. The translation,

1. Bamzi, P.N. Kaul : *A History of Kashmir*, 1962.
2. Preface to *Kings of Kashmira*, Vol. III.

named *Bahr-ul-Asmar* (The Sea of Tales) was most probably left unfinished by him and was completed by Abdul Qadir Badayuni (during the reign of Akbar) who also revived the text, rendering it into everyday Persian, as desired by the Emperor. Neither version is traceable now, but Mulla Ahmad's history was certainly the basis of the work of Malik Haider Chaudura.

In the vein of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, Malik Haider chronicled the annals of Kashmir in Persian, from the earliest times to his own—that is, the era of Jahangir, the narrative closing at 1617 A.D., the 12th year of the Emperor's reign. What makes the narrative, *Tawarikh-i-Kashmir*, an interesting mirror of contemporary events is Malik Haider's personal contact with political happenings of the day—his involvement was more direct than that of Kalhana. Haider and his brother, Malik Ali, protected Sher Afghan Khan's widow, Mihr-un-Nissa, who became Nur Jahan later. As a mark of her gratitude, she commended Malik Haider to Jahangir who conferred titles on him, plus a retainer in the government of Kashmir. He deserved the largesse for he was also an architect and rebuilt the Jama Masjid and other mosques. Malik Haider's surname, Chaudura, was derived from his village, situated 17 km to the south of Srinagar—mentioned as Malik's native village by Jahangir in his memoir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*. It is interesting that the annals of Kashmir, like Malik Haider's, Abul Fazal's and those of others, avowedly based on the *Rajataragini*, reproduce more of the ancedotes dealing with legends and the miraculous! Malik Haider goes to the extent of embellishing Kalhana's stories about the early Hindu kings. On the other hand, he finds only a few garbled pages for Kalhana's account of the Lohara dynasty, etc., which were much more historical.

Another chronicle, similarly entitled *Tawarikh-i-Kashmir*, was the work of Hasan Ali Kashmiri. Comparatively a short work, it was a record of evnets from the olden days to 1616 A.D., containing a detailed account of Kashmir under the Sultans up to the end of the reign of Hasan Shah. The poet-historian tradition of Kalhana persisted and Narayan Kaul Ajiz (in this case 'Ajiz' was his poetic suffix, in Persian)—a poet and Persian litterateur—followed in the wake of Haider Malik to write his *Tawarikh-i-Kashmir* in 1710 A.D., presenting a fairly objective picture of the Sultans and early Mughals. Most of the narrative,

however, is based on Haider Malik's chronicle.

One more poet, who was also an author of several works, to try his able hand at the demanding craft of the historian, was Muhammad Azam Kaul, who lived in Srinagar during the period of the later Mughals. His chronicle, entitled *Waquat-i-Kashmir* (Events of Kashmir) was completed in 1746 A.D. A product of devoted labour, stretched over 11 years, the chronicle was mainly an abridgement of earlier works but stood out for spotlighting the social, religious and literary trends of the time. Besides his literary attainments, Khawaja Muhammad Azam was held in esteem as a saint. After his death in 1765 A.D. his son, Khwaja Muhammad Aslam, adding to his work. wrote *Gauhar-i-Alam* (Jewels of the World).

Coming to the 19th century, we come across one more Kashmiri poet-historian, Pandit Birbal Kachru, who was also a distinguished Persian scholar and wrote *Mukhtsar Tarikh-i-Kashmir* (Brief History of Kashmir) during the reign of the second Dogra Maharaja, Ranjit Singh, in 1835 A.D. Dealing at length with the Mughal and Afghan periods of Kashmir's chequered history, Kachru dwelt, like Kalhana, on the economic conditions of the people. Though he highlighted the traditions and social customs of the Hindus, his evaluation of the times is of great value to the historian. There are, however, some pardonable exaggerations and statements not borne by history.

There is not much of Kashmir in the body of Sanskrit literature in India. It is this very lacuna that indirectly accounted for the importance of Kalhana's Chronicle, as we have noted already. Kashmir was no special exception; the territories which were contiguous to ancient centres of learning and literary activity were similarly ignored or meagrely referren to. Panini, however, referred to *Kashmira* in his celebrated grammar. The *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas* mentioned Kashmiris. Kashmir is included in the northern territories of India in *Brihitsamhita* by Varahamihira (500 A.D.)

Beyond the frontiers of India, it was a different story. Ptolemy in his geography (2nd century A.D.) placed the region of Kaspeiria (Kashmir) at "below the sources of the Bidaspes (Vitasta)". Hekataios (546-486 B.C.) mentions *Kaspapyros* as a city of Gandharians, for, Kashmir had close cultural and political relations with Gandhara (Kabul Valley) in ancient times.

Later, Herodotus (the 'Father of history') mentioned the city of *Kaspapyros*.

While these classical reference establish the fame of Kashmir in Occidental lands, the Chinese allusions to the Valley are even more detailed, going back to 541 A.D. The account of the well-known Chinese pilgrim, Hieun Tsiang, who stayed in the Valley for two years, from 631 A.D., is quite exhaustive. He described the king's domain, his tolerant ways, the people, the climate, terrain, etc., with exemplary accuracy. What he recorded about the then prevalent traditions about the origin of the Valley has proved immensely useful to historians. He wrote that he left the Valley in 633 A.D. via the Tosmaidan mountain route and reached *Pun-nu-tso*, which is *Parnotsa* in Kalhana's Chronicle, otherwise modern Poonch.

Of equal importance are the annals of the imperial T'ang dynasty, referring to the arrival at the court of the first embassy from Kashmir, sent by Ring *Tchent'o-lo-pi-li* (about 713 A.D.), followed by another sent by his brother and successor, *Mu-to-pi*. As historians have concurred, these names clearly refer to Chandrapida and Muktapida (Lalitaditya) of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. The references to the lake *Mo-ho-to-mo-loung* (or Mahapadma, the old name of the Wular Lake), and the city *Po-lo-ou-lo po-lo* (or Pravarapura, as Srinagar was called) are also borne out in the *Rajatarangini* and other Kashmiri chronicles.

Another Chinese pilgrim of note who also entered the Valley through Urusa (Hazara) like Hieun Tsiang, was Oukong in 759 A.D., who stayed for four memorable years. Though his descriptions of the Valley and the people lack the down-to-earth accuracy of Hieun Tsiang, their historical value persists for they corroborate a number of accounts of Kalhana of the foundations of temples and *viharas* by Avantivarman (855-883 A.D.).

This concourse came to an end with the eclipse of the T'ang dynasty. Apparently, political relations between the north-eastern kingdoms of India on the one hand and China on the other stopped abruptly. Chinese Buddhists did visit Kashmir during the next two centuries but left no account of the Valley or its people in their diaries.

Chronologically, the next foreign writers on the history—and geography—of Kashmir are the early Muslim visitors. Among them, the most important is Alberuni, the great Arab

scholar, whose curiosity in the secluded Valley was aroused by the victories of Mahmud Ghazni, for it was said that "the Hindus had fled to places which our hand cannot yet reach, to Kashmir, Banaras and other places..." Alberuni mentions Kashmir and Banaras as the celebrated centres of learning and science, but he never made it to Kashmir because Mahmud Ghazni failed to conquer Kashmir. He did write on Kashmir—of men and manners, their agriculture, arts and crafts—in much more detail than he did about other parts of India.

Kashmir under the Mughals was the subject of many writings. Abdul Fazal (in *Ain-i-Akbari*) included a summary of the early history of Kashmir, mentioning Kalhana's Chronicle as the source. Several Europeans, notably Father Gerome Xavier and Francis Bernier, who respectively accompanied Akbar and Aurangzeb, wrote about Kashmir and Kashmiris.

The observations of Dr. Bernier, the French physician who came with Aurangzeb in 1665 A.D., throw abundant light on the social and economic life of Kashmiris. In the course of felicitous praise of the beauties of the Valley (the description fittingly entitled *Paradise of the Indies*), Bernier was referring to Malik Haider's chronicle when he mentioned "the histories of the ancient kings of Kachemire made by order of Jehan-Guyre which I am now translating from the Persian." The translation, not traced so far, has persumably been lost. Malik Haider's chronicle was, again, the source in mid-18th century, for an abstract of the history of ancient kings of Kashmir in *Description de l'Inde*—the work of a Tyrolese missionary, Le Pere Tieffenthaler. A few Europeans left graphic accounts during the latter part of the 17th century and in the 18th century. Among these the most significant is the account of social, political and economic conditions left by George Froster, an officer of the Bengal Army who entered the Valley in 1783 A.D. What he writes of the sufferings borne by Kashmiris during the extremely Harsh regime of the Afghans recalls similar periods of oppression as narrated by Kalhana. The Sikh period (1819-46 A.D.) was covered by several European travellers; among them Vigne's account is the most important, for its revalution of the political and economic set up as well as the studies of the people, their ways and folklore, the shawl trade, etc., Moorecraft wrote about Ladakh also, and Alexander Cunningham's *Ladak* is a mine of information on the

'Little Tibet.'

"The Valley of Kashmir", wrote Sir Walter Lawrence,[1] one of the tourist-writers, "is the 'holy land' of the Hindus and I have rarely been in any village which cannot show a relic of antiquity..." The excavations started by amateurs and others progressively yielded important findings. While engaged in the collection of Sanskrit and Persian manuscripts, George Buehler (1875 A.D.) found evidence of old sites mentioned in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* and other works. Indicating the importance of the historical topography, he set down the guidelines for a complete and critical study of the *Rajatarangini.*

The fillip thus provided, archaeological discoveries threw light on the history of Kashmir, many corroborating the relevant statements in the *Rajatarangini.* A study of the old coins—gold, silver, copper and brass—found in and outside the State, complemented these researches. George Cunningham's collections of a large number of coins had a direct bearing on the chronological system of the *Rajatarangini.* The important results of his quest for ancient coins were published in a paper[2] which established the value of numismatic evidence for a critical evaluation of the chronicles of Kalhana and other historians.

The ethnography of the regions surrounding the Valley can be traced to an appreciable extent to the *Rajatarangini.* The upper reaches of the Kishenganga valley, situated above the celebrated Sharada shrine, were then as now, inhabited by the Darads—Kalhana made many references to them as the northern neighbours of Kashmiris. The "Mlecchas further to the north," mentioned by Kalhana, might also have been Darads, who had been converted to Islam in his time. Khasas peopled the southern and western adjacent regions of the Valley. Khasas ruled the hill states of Rajauri and Poonch ; a Khasa dynasty usurped the Valley in the 11th century. As far as Muzaffarabad in the north, there lived the Dombas. Bhauttas (the modern Bhutias of Ladakh and nearby districts) held the north-eastern and eastern parts of the Valley. These and other facts culled from the *Rajatarangini* will prove useful when a full-scale ethnological survey of the Kashmiri and other northern peoples is conducted.

1. *The Valley of Kashmir*
2. *Numismatic Chronicle,* 1846 A.D.

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